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The Key-Bearer:

The Crucified:

TWO SERMONS

Preached on occasion of the Opening of

ST. GEORGE'S UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

BLACKBURN, LANCASHIRE

The latter, by

THE REV. WILLIAM M'KERROW, D.D., MANCHESTER

The former, by

THE REV. ALEXANDER B. GROSART

Pastor of the Church.

EDINBURGH: WILLIAM OLIPHANT & CO.

LONDON: HAMILTON, ADAMS, & CO.

BLACKBURN: C. TIPLADY, CHURCH STREET

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1868

DUBLIN STEAM PRINTING COMPANY.

The Key-Bearer

AND

THE OPENED DOOR:

BEING A

SERMON-EXPOSITION

OF

CHRIST'S EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH OF PHILADELPHIA

Revelation iii. 7-13

PREACHED

ON SUNDAY, 21ST JUNE 1868

IN

ST. GEORGE'S UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

BLACKBURN, LANCASHIRE.

BY

THE REV. ALEXANDER B. GROSART, Pastor.

. 'that Golden Key
That opes the palace of Eternity.'
Comus.

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Philadelphía.

'In the loss of Ephesus, the Christians deplored the fall of the first Angel, the extinction of the first candlestick, of the Revelations ; the desolation is complete ; and the Temple of Diana, or the Church of Mary, will equally elude the search of the curious traveller. The circus and three stately theatres of Laodicea, are now peopled with wolves and foxes ; Sardis is reduced to a miserable village ; the God of Mahomet, without a rival or a son, is installed in the mosques of Thyatira and Pergamus ; and the populousness of Smyrna is supported by the foreign trade of the Franks and Armenians. *Philadelphia alone has been saved*, by prophecy or courage. At a distance from the sea, forgotten by the emperors, encompassed on all sides by the Turks, her valiant citizens defended their religion and freedom above fourscore years, and at length capitulated with the proudest of the Ottomans. Among the Greek colonies and Churches of Asia, *Philadelphia is still erect*—A COLUMN IN A SCENE OF RUINS—a pleasing example that the paths of honour and safety may sometimes be the same.'—GIBBON : *Decline and Fall*, clxiv.

TO THE
Session and Congregation
OF
ST. GEORGE'S UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,
BLACKBURN,
THIS
'OPENING' SERMON
IS
AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED
BY
THEIR PASTOR,
ALEX. B. GROSART.

(RECAP)

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NOTE.

I HAD hoped to have prefixed to my own Sermon one by the REV. WILLIAM M'KERROW, D.D., of Manchester, and another (one of two) by PROFESSOR EADIE, of Glasgow : the former preached on THURSDAY, 18th June, on 'opening' our new Church, the other, on the evening of the succeeding Sunday (21st June) ; but circumstances have prevented either being furnished. I regret it, and can only hope that the 'thoughts that breathe in words that burn,' spoken to us by our good and eloquent friends, will not soon be forgotten. Each emphatically 'preached' Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and our souls were stirred within us. We must ever cherish gratefully the service rendered.

In writing out my own Sermon for the Press as a wished-for Memorial of the taking possession of St. George's, I have in some places enlarged on what was spoken, and thereby, I hope, rendered the little volume a less inadequate exposition of a peculiarly wealthy part of the Divine Word. The explanation and application of the Epistle is based on careful study of the Original, and in other circumstances I might have been tempted to discuss certain critical matters of exegesis more fully. As it is, I venture to believe that my view of the Epistle, as a whole, and in its several portions, will be found in accord with the Original, albeit I have found myself constrained to differ from even such men as Archbishop TRENCH, and the DEAN and a CANON of CANTERBURY. These Epistles have very far from yielded up their 'matterful' thoughts. Some day The Master will give it to His own appointed one to concentrate the now scattered rays of light that play over them, into a steady belt of seven-fold stars, so that the Patmos Vision may again be seen. Ours is but a lowly contribution toward this. May it be received as a 'mite' cast into the great Treasury.

The few notes at bottom of some pages, and at the close, indicate side-thoughts that could not be pursued, without, in the first instance, unduly extending the delivery of the Sermon, and now, equally unduly extending the bulk of the volume. It may be worth while to some to turn to these appended notes.

A. B. G.

15 St. Alban's Place,
Blackburn, Lancashire.

* * Dr. M'Kerrow's Sermon, since received, is added hereto. See Prefatory 'Note' to it.

THE KEY-BEARER

AND

THE OPENED DOOR.

'And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write : These things saith He that is holy, He that is true, He that hath the key of David, He that openeth, and no man shutteth ; and shutteth, and no man openeth ; I know thy works : behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it : for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept My word, and hast not denied My name. Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie : behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly : hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go no more out : and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from My God : and I will write upon him My new name. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches.'—REV. iii. 7-13.

THE EPISTLES to the Seven Churches of Asia, in relation to the Apocalypse regarded as a whole, and until the events of the latter-day glory illumine its mysterious

and awesome darkness, may be likened to the Milky Way—that phantom Rainbow of the Night. They present a space of starry splendour ringed with impermeable blackness.

The Epistle now before us is ‘one bright particular star.’ It is addressed to a Congregation that in the Past had done well, and is designed to stir them to larger service, and grander achievement, and wider reach, and more potential influence, in the Future. It is one of only two in which no censure occurs. I apprehend that, in various ways, its facts and counsels, monitions and promises, have a special fitness to our circumstances on this solemn and joyous occasion. Accordingly, ‘if the Lord will,’ I propose to give an explanation and application of the whole Epistle. May the still living and loving Governor and Guardian of His Church grant a gracious blessing on our words from His Word! I shall pass as rapidly as may be from point to point, suggesting rather than fully thinking-out.

v. 7. ‘To the *angel* of the Church in Philadelphia.’ I emphasize in the outset the word ‘angel.’ It means ‘messenger:’ and

here designates the 'pastor' of the Congregation, or the minister of the Gospel.¹ I look upon it that a copy of the Apocalypse was sent to each of the Seven Churches, and with each copy a short note or epistle inscribed to the particular Church. If this were so, then the 'pastor' would naturally be the 'angel' or 'messenger' through whom it would be communicated. Be this as it may, it is worth pausing a moment over the name of 'angel' as thus applied. Consider its—greatness: for you mark it is the name given to those pure and mighty spirits, whose place is fast by the Eternal Throne. Consider its—obligation: for their swift and intense obedience to His lightest command is to be our example, 'hearken-
ing unto the voice of His word' (Psalm ciii. 20). Consider its—preciousness: for does it not seem meant to tell us that as these heavenly messengers descended to our Earth, so we shall in turn ascend to be among them? I covet not for myself, or for you, now and here, the awful splendour, the ineffable whiteness of the angels; but I do covet, and would join with you in seeking, their beautiful humility—their fine

¹ See Notes at close, *a*.

secrecy—their long patience—their sweet condescension—their quiet vigilance—their soft, relenting strength—their imperious mercy—their holy ardour—their supreme consecration—their forgiving silence—their unrequitable ministering—their meekness of wisdom—their large, full love.

What honour, too, is put on the office of the Christian minister in this great name of ‘angel!’ Outwardly, in all likelihood, he was a lowly, unlearned, unfamous man, of whom the gay and luxurious citizens of the memorial city of *Attalus Philadelphus* had scarcely heard, or heard of only to mock and despise, as perchance they caught a glimpse of the lowly ‘conventicle’ roof from the heights of TMOLUS. Nevertheless, from His great White Throne, the exalted, but still sympathetic Saviour, kept watch over His humble ‘messenger,’ and names him augustly ‘angel.’ Talk of human titles and patents of nobility after that, who list! The true servant of the Master, be he the least and most obscure, has a mightier anointing Hand laid on him than Earth’s nobles may boast of.

And now, my Brother, my Sister, before

me, Are you realizing in any vital and active sense that you, too, are called by the grace that has 'called' and sanctified you, to be Christ's 'angel,' Christ's 'messenger'? I put it to every one of you, as a thing not to be dismissed or left unanswered, Have you ever been the Lord's 'messenger' of love and mercy to a fellow-sinner? Have you ever in real, consuming earnestness, tried to win ONE to listen to the grand story of redeeming love? Have you, yourself, ever spoken right out for Jesus to a fellow-man? Is there to be none 'in glory' through your instrumentality? If not—Why not? Is not this the warrant, 'The Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And LET HIM THAT HEARETH, say, Come' (Rev. xxii. 17).

Then, beneath this, there is the sorrowful and awful parallel question, Have none of us been as the devil's 'angel,' the devil's 'messenger' to our fellow-man? Have not words fallen from us?—Has not the evil of our lives—negative or positive—been an unholy constraint on others to make them, at least, '*neglect* the great salvation?' Is it not tremendously possible that some of us have been the very allies of the great Destroyer? Is it not

possible that there are 'lost souls' in Hell through our instrumentality? May my poor appeal be used by The Master to thrill some consciences! 'Why do ye not understand My speech? even because ye cannot hear My word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do!' (St. John viii. 43, 44).

Further: 'These things saith He that is holy, He that is true.' It is not required that I now enlarge on these two titles of our Lord, 'The Holy' and 'The True.' We have already frequently explained them, and they must often come before us. I note simply, in passing, that if human words can put an absolute Divine claim, you have herein supreme Divinity claimed by Jesus Christ as being in Himself the One alone who is and cannot be other than 'Holy,' and who is and cannot be other than 'True:' at once the source and communicator of all holiness and truth.

I have remarked that this Epistle contains only approval. It is the approval of Him that is 'holy,' of Him that is 'true.' Approval from Him is approval indeed.

But, passing from this, you have the

Saviour brought before us in the words that follow, in a very arresting form : 'He that hath the key of David, He that openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth.' The Lord, in thus standing forth as the KEY-BEARER, does so as the anti-type of that luminous vision vouchsafed to Isaiah, when, in foretelling the removal of Sheb-nah to make way for his servant Eliakim, as custodier of the 'house of David,' there towers up before him a grander than either, bearing a Key too mighty for hand of mortal mould, having fit rest only on the shoulders of the king-servant, the servant-king, the Messiah, the Son and Lord of David. You need but to re-read the old words to feel that something immeasurably greater than any mere servant-change in the palace of an earthly king, runs with tidal flow and force through the prophecy : Isaiah xxii. 20-22 :

'And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilki-ah :

'And I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy girdle, and I will commit thy government into his hand : and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah.

'And the key of the house of David will I la

upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open.'

While on Earth, the Lord was wont to bring up ancient promise, and hope, and symbol, and type, and prediction—sometimes with specific, and at other times, tacit reference—and announce their realization and fulfilment in Himself; and so now He fetches from the illustrious Past a mighty portraiture—adding more wondrous words still—and proclaims that in Him is its consummate accomplishment: 'These things saith He that is Holy, He that is true, He that hath the key of David, He that openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth.'

The representation is finely congruous. It is the head of the House who has the power of the 'key.' It is he, who ultimately decides when the 'door' shall be 'locked,' and for whom 'opened.' For example, if an inmate desires to bring in a visitor, it can be done only with consent of the master. It has even passed into our proudest proverbs, 'An Englishman's house is his castle'—that, without moat, or wall, or cannon, is inviolable to the most powerful, without its owner's

sanction. Hence, you readily understand that, when the Lord claims to have the 'key' of David, He claims to be the chief of David's 'house,' the prince concerning whom such glorious things were spoken, that is, He claims and proclaims that He is not only of 'the house and lineage of David,' and 'made of the seed of David according to the flesh,' but the prince springing from his loins, in whom the words find their fulfilment, 'His seed shall endure for ever,' and 'His throne be as the sun before me' (Psalm lxxxix. 36).

Apart then from what is 'written'—and self-demonstratively from what is 'written'—such an office as this of the Key-Bearer, is what we would have looked for to be filled by the Redeemer. In whom else might supreme, sovran, unchallengeable authority be placed in His House, if not in the Lord? And so 'it was, and is, and shall be.' Still the great message is, 'He that hath the key of David, He that openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth.'

It was, I do not doubt, a 'key' that 'opened' to many a gorgeous chamber that Shebnah in his degradation had to

transfer to Eliakim. Very 'magnifical' is the story of the 'house' or palace of David and of Solomon. But glorious as was such a 'key' to such a 'house'—as being representative of unparalleled honour, authority, and responsibility—it was but a poor, dim, inadequate hieroglyph of that seen in vision by St. John gleaming on His 'royal shoulder.'

It were long to tell, and hard, of all the doors that Key opens and shuts, in the hands of its Divine Bearer. He has 'opened' the way for exiled because fallen man to the Father, by 'the new and living way.' He has 'opened' the golden gates of Paradise 'Lost,' to believers : to them He has for ever 'shut' the adamantine doors of Hell. He 'opens' and 'shuts' the mystic gate of human birth, and He holds the 'keys' of the 'narrow house.' He 'opened' the Scriptures to the disciples ; He 'opened' their understanding to understand them ; He 'opened' the heart of Lydia ; and what He did for them He does still. He 'opens' every 'door' into the ivory palace of the soul, into every guest-chamber there. He 'opened' their prison-doors for Peter, and Paul, and Silas, and the men 'of whom

the world was not worthy,' and still He is Providence, His authority and power extending to all realms.

Regarding His office of Key-Bearer in another aspect, He knows every 'door' into every human soul. I have indicated this already, but take these details. He knows the 'door' of the man's heart that is still unconverted: He sees how it is barred and bolted against Him. He knows the 'door' of the man's heart that is still delaying, 'neglecting,' if not positively rejecting: at it He has long stood knocking unheeded, though heard. He knows the 'door' of the man's heart that is awakened and anxious: He marks the wistful, yearning, expectancy—expectancy which He Himself has created—for the first faintest echoings of His approaching foot-fall. He knows the 'door' of the man who, by His grace, is a believer: He looks and sees it ever standing on swift hinge to welcome Him. How gloriously does He use His key 'in the day of His power!' How do the strongholds of sin and Satan fall! How is speculation turned into decision! How is the dark cloud of doubt belted with the rainbow of hope! How in gracious condescension

does He 'come in' and 'sup!' 'O Lord, I have heard Thy speech and was afraid: O Lord, REVIVE Thy Work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy' (Habakkuk iii. 2).

Thus knowing each 'door' of each separate soul, He also knows our 'dwelling.' His message to Ananias was not simply to go to 'Saul,' but to a given 'house' in a given street: 'Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus' (Acts ix. 11). Thus is it still: He knows where we each 'tarry.' He passes through every 'door,' whether it be the pillared and mullioned royal 'gate' of the palace, or of obscurest hut, where 'poor men lie,' or of the 'upper room' consecrated to prayer, or of the sick-chamber, within which the last weary struggle is faintly ending, or the grated 'door' of the godly or patriot 'prisoners,' or that behind which crouches fireless, foodless, Misery. In short, He knows, and has ever beneath His omniscient eyes—the eyes that 'wept'—every 'door' through all the many-chambered palace of the Universe, and He 'opens' and 'shuts' as pleaseth Him.

It is noteworthy that, manifold as are the 'doors,' the Lord appears as the Key-Bearer—a key, not keys ; one, not many. Elsewhere, in an earlier vision, He presents Himself as having the 'keys' of hell and of death (i. 18) ; but now one 'key' only is borne.

JOHN BUNYAN, in his immortal allegory, seems to have recognised the wonder and the glory of this singleness of the key, for you will remember that Christian's 'key' called 'promise'—which he plucked out of his bosom—'opened' wherever he went : 'opened' the 'door' of the dungeon of Doubting Castle, 'opened' also the 'door' into the castle-yard, and last, the iron gate that led to liberty. Realizing what was intended by the Pilgrim's 'key,' the fitness of such a representation is apparent ; and similarly with our Lord, the august Key-Bearer. Meet it is that there should need no change and interchange of keys with Him, such as human infirmity demands, but that plastic to His touch, informed as with contractile and expansive force, the one key should respond to His every movement. But what a broadening and subliming of our conception of the Redeemer as the Key-Bearer have we in this,

as we regard the key in His hand in its infinite application of 'opening' and 'shutting.'

v. 8, 'I know thy works.' The 'I' here is emphatic, and expresses the infinitude of His knowledge, and indeceivable penetrativeness. Then, 'thy works,' is equally large in its sweep—'thy works,' all that has been done and is being done in thee, whether in secret or openly, whether observed or unobserved, helped or hindered, seconded or marred, of men. 'Works' too, not mere 'good words' but deeds, as their manifestation and visible form. Following on this is a grand announcement of reward and a summons to wider activity :—

'Behold! I have set before thee an open door and no man can shut it.'¹ In Philadelphia, in His good providence, the Lord Jesus had gathered a 'people,' and had given them an 'angel' or pastor; and now, not simply as individuals, but in their collective capacity as a Christian Church, He would have them bring in the sinners of the community to that 'house' of which He is the Key-Bearer—that great spiritual 'house,' over which

¹ See Notes at close, *b*.

in grander sort than was Moses over his, He was 'faithful' (Hebrews iii. 2, 5, 6).

The 'door' that is here meant is obviously not the 'door' of the Church through which individual members enter. It is a door opened *for* the Church to go in by: It is divinely-given opportunity for Christian usefulness, in all the broad and glorious meaning of that expression--opened up to them *as a Church*. You mark, 'before *thee*.' It is a door which man could not have opened, and which man cannot shut.¹ It is a 'door' that, in

¹ Is it not to be feared that much of the (comparative) un-success of existent missions, is to be found in the (merely) human 'opening' of the 'door' whereby the Gospel has been introduced. In such case we have no blessed promise of the 'door' being kept 'open' so as never to be 'shut.' For example, it is hideous to mark the complaisant spirit in which so-called Christians defend Great Britain on going to war with 'barbarians,' by saying, 'Oh, it will open the way for the Gospel.' Take the infamous opium war with China, and many of our 'annexations' in India and elsewhere. What great expectations were there of 'opening' China and India for the Gospel through these wars? No doubt, conflicts and overturnings, and the very 'wrath of man,' are overruled to make 'openings,' and we must not limit the Holy One

giving access and entrance to the Church, collectively and as individuals, to extended and deepened service for The Master, therewith also 'opened' before them boundless privilege. Why? Because it is a law of the Key-Bearer, that it is through usefulness—in the large, Christian sense of the word—Churches, congregations, and private Christians, enter into their holiest enjoyment and highest glory. One cannot enlarge—having so much else to consider—but, my dear friends, suffer me with all earnestness and affection to impress upon you the happiness, nay, the heaven-like blessedness, and the glory, to

of Israel, Jehovah. By 'terrible things in righteousness,' He answers His Church's prayers many a time (Haggai ii. 6, 7). But what the Lord may do is one thing, and what man does another; *we* must remember that 'the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.' It is frightful for nations, as for individuals, to do wrong in the expectation that out of it God will educe right, and especially contemptible and anti-Christian, to take all the glory of what God educes, unhumbled by the sin and shame He has to forgive and overcome. One has not room in a foot-note to deal with a matter like this siftingly; but as a historic fact, of how few of our Christian enterprises in foreign lands can the 'door' set 'open' be truthfully ascribed to the Key-Bearer, the 'I' of the text?

which the divinely-opened 'door' gives access. When I look along the vista stretching beyond—away out, in this life, and away up, in the everlasting life, the prospect grows 'dark with excess of bright.' The 'faithful over a few things'—Who may try to tell what lies before him? He who, under The Master, has turned 'a sinner from the error of his way'—who can estimate the thrill of unending joy in the reward? These most vivid and lustrous stars shall all be quenched one day, but he who does that, will 'shine as the stars,' and 'for ever and ever.'¹

The existence of such a congregation in Philadelphia was as a 'door' of access to the blinded, heart-hardened, and conscience-seared masses of the frivolous and wicked city, and especially to the many Jews collected there—whereby effective action and usefulness were set before them, and consentaneously infinite enjoyment and reward. That this is the meaning of the 'open door' is confirmed by St. Paul in various of his Epistles, *e.g.*, 'But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost. For a great door and effectual is opened unto

¹ See Notes at end, c, for something more on this vital matter.

me, and there are many adversaries' (1 Corinthians xvi. 8, 9); 'Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother: but taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia' (2 Corinthians ii. 12, 13); 'Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds' (Colossians iv. 3). The same expression occurs in the Acts of the Apostles, xiv. 27, 'And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.' In all these places the thing expressed—as with ourselves—is an 'opening' for preaching the Gospel and for Christian usefulness—in the full sense—given by the grace of the Lord Jesus. So is it in this message to the Philadelphian Church. They have the assurance that He Himself had established them there—had marked all their working toward the formation of a Christian congregation there—had known every element of difficulty over-

come by faith, of opposition removed by love, of effort strengthened by hope, of generous giving, through ungrudging self-denial, of tearful sowing crowned by golden sheaves of harvest, of joy shaded by sorrow, of holiness neutralized by back-sliding, of gains swept away by death—all the light and shadow of each individual life and of the congregational life.¹ He knew all. Hence the emphatic ‘I know thy works.’ But now—as I observed at the beginning—having done well in the past, He turns their eyes upward to Himself, that gazing upon Him in the ‘vision’ which rewards the long, serene, clear-eyed look of Faith, they might see the key on His shoulder, nay, in His hand—the nail-pierced hand—as He was then and there exercising His prerogative of setting before them an ‘open door’ by which, if they would but enter, He should accomplish transcendent results, producing intellectual, moral, and spiritual changes of the most fundamental kind, and as a light and glory over all, present enjoyment and heavenly reward.

Well! it is no accommodation, my dear friends, but the natural and inevitable

¹ See Notes at close, *d*.

and very joyous outcome of the grand verity that the Key-Bearer of the house, that is, the Church, still lives, as the ever-watchful, ever-upholding, ever-faithful, ever-gracious guardian of all Workers for Him—I say it is no spiritualizing or sentimentalizing of the message before us, to recognise in our own entrance this day, into this new and worthy house, a ‘door’ for widened usefulness ‘set’ before us as a Christian Congregation—new ‘openings’ for devout and holy forthgoing among the community in whose midst we are placed—new opportunities for evidencing the gentle force, the forceful gentleness, of a company of Christian men and women resolved to witness and work for Christ—new calls to catch up the great invitation, ‘Come,’ with the impulsion, if not compulsion, of persuasive earnestness—new Spirit-touched awakenings to past shortcomings and neglects, past un-cost of real self-sacrifice and ‘fellowship’ in Christ’s sufferings—new accrediting of the Lord and taking Him at His word, and in united phalanx, as part of the great sacramental army, addressing ourselves—from the pastor to the youngest child—toward making this house of God the

honoured inheritrix of all that was venerable, and true, and good, and pure, and noble, and tender, and meek, and 'prudent,' and strong, in the inestimable ministry of the 'good man' of God who so long, and so faithfully, and so well and wisely, and—as the very need for this enlarged house eloquently shows—successfully, laboured among you in word and doctrine.¹ As really then, as of old, in the vision that flashed on the burdened eye of John in Patmos, be it yours and mine, as forming together a Christian congregation, to hear the One only authorized Key-Bearer, saying, 'I know thy works: behold I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it.'

It cannot righteously be deemed as 'turning aside' to controversy—rather should I be justly chargeable with unmindfulness of privilege did I forget it—when I congratulate ourselves that, in the midst of the passionate fears, and forebodings, and presentiments, of the present time, we, as Nonconformists of the old genuine stamp, can rejoicingly take as our very own, every word of the Lord's message, 'Behold, I have set before thee an open

¹ See Notes at close, *c.*

door, and *no man can shut it.*' Let State-allied, and State-legislated for, and State-controlled Churches, dread the ebb and flow of public opinion and legislation—let them ignobly whine of closed churches, that is, 'shut doors' under given emergencies—we, 'free-born' and untrammelled, stand here to-day, by His long blessing, in the calm, the security of our Christ-given sanctions, with a 'wider door' than ever 'open' before us; and thank God, 'NO MAN CAN SHUT IT,' or in any way impinge on our Christian freedom of worship or action, or dare to dictate in one 'jot or tittle.'

When then, a Christian congregation, such as our own, is established in a place, and when, in the progress of events, it is enabled to take a higher platform and a more commanding attitude than hitherto, the Key-Bearer would have such congregation understand, that these are not ends but means, much less privileges that are to terminate in their own advantage and comfort, but must be held as weightening responsibility, as enlarging opportunity, as in short 'opening' a new 'door' whereby to pass to great and greater things for Him. I use the word '*great*' advisedly, for Christian work is the only really great

and vital work that a man, or Christian congregation, can do ; and let the world mock, and let arrogant as ignorant High Churchmen superciliously ignore the very existence of what is merely a Christian congregation,—in His estimate a ‘power’ of God, a force, beneficent as strong, is in energy, wherever a company of Christian men and women unite for Christian life and work.

By the necessities of the case it must be so, seeing that a Christian congregation touches society at myriad points, by its individual members and in its collective capacity, and as well directly as indirectly. For observe, while during the hours of public worship we assemble within these walls as a Church, with the close of the service we pass out and forth, every one to his own sphere—pass out to terrace, and crescent, and square, street and lane, and country—to mill, and shop, and warehouse, and desk, and loom, and all the manifold occupations of labour and leisure in this hive of commercial industry. Wherever you go, my brother, my sister, there is your opportunity, there is a ‘door,’ there you may be Christ’s ‘angel,’ Christ’s ‘messenger’—GO IN, taking as your watch-

word the -Wise Man's stirring charge, 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, DO IT with thy MIGHT' (Eccles. ix. 10).

Returning on the words of this verse, I ask you to notice that the opportunity was given, the 'door' was 'opened' to the congregation of Philadelphia after the Key-Bearer had *prepared them for the work to be done*: 'I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.'

Speaking generally, such PREPARATION, in order to fitness, is plainly a necessity. You don't set open your library-'door,' or your drawing-room, to your kitchen-maid, and look to her to arrange your books or dust the delicate ornaments that are as a silent culture to the eye. She might be set by her mistress to scrub the door-step, or other rougher and coarser work. For finer she must have training. Similarly, Christ does not open doors before incompetent or lazy people, who will make no use of their opportunities—who have no appreciation of the deep enjoyment or the after-glory of Christian usefulness and service.

The Church of Philadelphia was pre-

pared for the great work assigned her by a three-fold preparation and fitness : 'For thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.' These I would consider in order.

I. '*A little strength.*'—You have not here high praise, but most real.¹ The Lord seeks to keep humble by the 'little'—only '*a little strength*;' but He would keep hopeful by the 'strength'—'little,' still it is 'strength;' much as when in the deep-shadowed story of Peter's fall, while his pre-eminence over all his fellow-disciples is remembered in that he 'followed,' whereas they all forsook Him and fled, it nevertheless is added, with inflexible truth, 'afar off.'

Perhaps there is scarcely anything about which Christian men and Christian congregations are more liable to mistake than this, of what really constitutes 'strength;' and, entering as we do to-day this our new and noble house, it becomes us to beware of false strength. I should be ashamed of myself if I did not try to exhort and warn here with all fidelity.

Wherein, then, does Church-strength lie? Certainly not in the countenance

¹ See Notes at close, *f*.

and support of the Civil Magistrate ; for in a true Christian Church there is but one Key-Bearer—not in a mere splendid building—not in a ritual, however imposing—not in mere numbers—not in mere wealth and worldly position—not in mere intellect and education and culture—not even in gifts and outward activities, such as embody rather than ensoul some men's and congregations' Christianhood—not in religious fuss or sensationalism—not in any of the thousand worldly elements which we often value so unduly. I name what seem to me some of the *essentia* of Church strength ; and I would only 'put you in remembrance' that the elements of strength which I name are the gift and produce of that blessed Spirit 'who worketh in us,'—'Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts.'

(a.) *Faith in God*—the conviction that it is in Him we are 'strong'—faith in His almightiness and grace—faith that humbles itself, and looks up to God 'in the face of Jesus Christ'—faith that breathes out in prayer, and securely counts on an answer—faith that 'expects great things from God,' and therefore, 'attempts great things

for God.' It has been by Faith that all mighty wonders have been wrought, that the grandest human work has been done, whether by individuals or by a Church. Take that marvellous xi. chapter of Hebrews, and ponder its examples, telling of the might and masterdom of Faith. Nothing equal in grandness to these was ever lived, and the root of all is Faith.

Men who look from the outside, may sneer at Faith as fanaticism and enthusiasm and mysticism ; but whoever knows it by experimental possession, knows that it is the strongest thing about him, and what alone lifts up and keeps high. I can wish, consequently, no better gift for myself or for you, or for us as a Congregation than this, of an immovable faith in God, so that the Word being accepted as the revealed will of God, we act upon the Divine testimony whether we comprehend it or don't, —in fearless reliance on His character, and on His Word simply as being His. 'Whatever God does must of course be most right. My understanding it would not make it more right ; neither could I do anything to mend matters, if I understood it ever so well. Every one should keep in his own place. It is the

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creature's place to believe, adore, and love.'¹
O the pricelessness of this gift of faith in God! Here indeed is strength.

(b.) *A firm, intelligent, loving hold of the Gospel.*—If man or Church do not hold the Gospel so as to be held by it—if man or Church do not hold the Gospel through knowledge, as distinguished from tradition, on the one hand, and impulse on the other—if man or Church do not hold the Gospel with deep and earnest affection—very little will be accomplished. Every 'wind of doctrine' and 'sleight' of men who lie in wait to deceive, will in such case be perpetually 'shifting' from the old moorings, 'dragging' the old anchors, sending forth into a shoreless, harbourless sea of doubt, with no star above, and no chart or compass below. But, if dominated by the truth as it is in Jesus, indi-

¹ *The Precious Blood ; or, the Price of our Salvation.* By F. W. Faber, D.D., pp. 12, 13.

Dr. CHARLES HODGE, of America, thus puts it:—
'The first and most indispensable condition of piety is submission—blind, absolute, entire submission of the intellect, the conscience, the life, to God. This is blind, but not irrational. It is the submission of a sightless child to an all-seeing Father—of a feeble, beclouded intelligence to the infinite Intelligence.'

vidual and congregation alike, is made steadfast, and therefore strong. Yet, need I say, strength is not vehemence or spasmodic action or loudness. Contrariwise Christian strength is calm, quiet, cultured, modest, and courteous, half-shy. It will come out as much in private as in public, in social gatherings, in informal talks with friends at firesides, in kind and kindly-put monitions or cheer, at the right time, in generous risks of giving offence rather than leave 'at ease,' in heroic allegiance to unapplauded truth, and in fearless preference of the simpleness of Divine and Divinely-appointed instrumentalities, to the most showy and most skilful-seeming human contrivances: in all these ways operating far beyond the sham-strength of a mere petrified orthodoxy, that goes on mumbling a Creed it has ceased to feel as to exemplify. You must all have marked this. You must have marked what a 'grip' a preacher takes of the soul of a Congregation when the blessed old Gospel is a believed and loved Gospel to himself. You must have marked how a thousand wandering eyes are drawn and riveted when the sweet old story—told for the thousandth time—is told by one who has

felt it to be the power of God unto salvation for himself. You must have marked how a Christian Congregation that really and intelligently loves the Gospel is a 'power' in a community—far beyond the mere proportion of numbers. You must have marked how unhuman, how self-evidently a Divine instrumentality is at work, when a congregation is thus welded together, and impelled to activity from Above.

(c.) *Holiness*.—This is as the perfume of a Pansy to its beauty, and when genuine, comes of the 'indwelling' of God by the great, pure, and purifying Holy Ghost—not—in God's name, not—the spurious and unreal holiness of spiritual necromancy, or of tones and set, cant phrases—even when these are in Bible-words and out of venerable Confessions and Prayer-books, and accompanied by rapt and unctuous looks. None of that for the sake of Him who is Holy and True, and never so true as in His loathing of the mere mimicry and vesture of Truth and Holiness—but the very holiness of Christ Himself—that radiant, joyful holiness which is just a pure (because 'purified') heart expressed in a pure life—

that all-penetrative, all-pervading holiness which cannot be guilty of trickery, sharp practice, meanness, backbiting, envy, spite, any more than of gross violations of the Decalogue—that upward-looking holiness, whose chiefest ambition is to be growing into the ‘likeness’ of the Master. Such holiness, individual or collective, may be, I fear inevitably will be, hated ; but it will make itself felt as a power wherever it comes, and awe into homage, if not transform into resemblance—as the poet’s Una and her milk-white steed passed unscathed through the forest. O ! for more of this unmistakable, this unearthly, unhuman, yet most human ‘strength.’ We have in all our Churches intellect, learning, wealth; enow and to spare ; but more holy men and women, more self-evidencing holiness we all need. Before that, MILTON’S magnificent conception of Zephon should be realized :—

‘ So spake the Cherube, and his grave rebuke,
Severe in youthful beautie, added grace
Invincible ; abashed the devil stood,
And felt how awful goodness is, and saw
Vertue, in her shape how lov’ly, saw, and pin’d
His loss.’—[*Paradise Lost*, Book iv., 845-850.]

It was said of Robert Murray M’Cheyne,

that he gave every one who entered his presence *a sense of holiness*. That is the stamp of men the Church and world need. As I have said, such 'holiness' will not be popular ; for it is a continual and unbearable protest against sin, and a protest that cannot be replied to. But, though not popular, it carries with it a transcendent power—power of rebuke, power of arrestment, power commending the Gospel, power that men's consciences tremble under.

(*d.*) *Love*.—Men, and alas ! the Churches, have wrought all too many of their conquests by hate. Surely by the nineteenth century it is time they tried the strength of love rather—love to Christ and to God in Him—love fusing all belonging to us as individuals and as a Congregation, into one, as in the primitive Church, when the disciples were of 'one heart and one soul.' What potency, ay, omnipotency, goes with love of this high and deep, this glowing and beautiful kind ! There may not be in it the electric fire that flashes and dazzles awfully ; but there is that electric sympathy that makes 'the whole world kin,' and that gives that better and deeper than Masonic touch of recognition and brother-

hood, which enables us to rise above the shibboleth of a party or a sect, and occupy the broader platform of allegiance to the One Master, entendering our principles with the thrill of feeling, and which hears, and believes, and hopes, and endureth 'all things.' 'Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not LOVE, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal' (1 Cor. xiii. 1). COWPER has drawn the portrait of such a man in immortal lines :

'He loved the world that hated him ; the tear
That dropped upon His Bible was sincere ;
Assailed by scandal and the tongue of strife,
His only answer was a blameless life ;
And he that forged, and he that threw the dart,
Had each a brother's interest in his heart.
Paul's love of Christ, and steadiness unbribed,
Were copied close in him, and well transcribed ;
He followed Paul, his zeal a kindred flame,
His apostolic charity the same.
Like him, crossed cheerfully tempestuous seas,
Forsaking country, kindred, friends, and ease ;
Like him he laboured, and like him, content
To bear it, suffered shame where'er he went.¹

Such, I take it, are four of the main ele-

¹ *Hope*: 574-587. The original was Whitefield.
[Leuco nomos = white field].

'Leuconomus (beneath well-sounding Greek),
I show a name a poet must not speak.'

ments of true Christian 'strength:' these implying, or rather involving, infinite besides, as not one of them can stand alone. Put them together, and ask, What sort of power is a Christian Church to exhibit? The answer is, spiritual power—such as shall touch consciences, rebuke sin, repress evil, awaken spiritual thought, bring in those 'without,' help forward all that is holy and true, promote such issues as righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. Such is genuine 'strength.' Well, the Church of Philadelphia had 'a little' of this 'strength,' and, as we shall now see, used it faithfully; for their steadfastness is next praised.

2. '[Thou] hast kept my word.' By 'word' here was no doubt intended all of the written revelation of God which at that time was accessible to the Church of Philadelphia, consisting of the Old Testament and of the treasured words of Jesus Himself, current among the Churches before they were reduced to writing either in the Gospels or Epistles.

With application to us at this later day, 'word' is to be taken in all its fulness. A Christian Church can do nothing of its work proper without Christ's 'word.' It

is the instrument for producing spiritual results which can't be dispensed with.¹ A Christian Church may do, so far, without many things,—as philosophy, learning, oratory, wealth,—but can't do without this. If you would be truly useful, my brethren, you must let the word of Christ 'dwell in you richly.' Thus had it been with the Christians at Philadelphia—they had 'kept' the 'word' of Christ—'kept' it in affectionate remembrance—storing it in

¹ I cannot resist placing here that quaint snatch of talk between Great-Heart and Valiant-for-the-Truth, in the *Pilgrim's Progress*:—"Then, said Great-heart to Mr. Valiant-for-Truth, "Thou hast worthily behaved thyself: let me see thy sword." So he showed it him. When he had taken it in his hand, and looked thereon a while, he said, "Ha! it is a right Jerusalem blade." *Valiant*—"It is so. Let a man have one of these blades, with a hand to wield it, and skill to use it, and he may venture upon an angel with it. He need not fear its holding, if he can but tell how to lay it on. Its edges will never blunt. It will cut flesh and bones, and soul and spirit, and all" (Hebrews iv. 12). *Great-Heart*—"But you fought a great while. I wonder you were not weary." *Valiant*—"I fought till my sword did cleave to my hand; and when they were joined together as if a sword grew out of my arm, and when the blood ran through my fingers, then I fought with more courage. *Great-Heart*—"Thou hast done well; thou hast resisted unto blood, striving against sin." . . .

their memory—hiding it in their hearts. They had ‘kept’ it as against all temptations and tendencies to let it ‘slip’; had made daily use of it—built their hopes on it—drawn their faith’s life and nurture from it, and told it to others. Happy these!—happy the Congregation of whom it can be said, they have ‘kept’ Christ’s word! On the other hand ‘Ichabod,’ yea, ‘Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin,’ must be inscribed on that Church—however magnificent be its building and illustrious be its congregations—wherein the ‘Word’ of Christ is subordinated to human speculation or to human Creed. Down goes such a preacher, —and not on his knees. Bible-fact and Bible-thought, and Bible-promise, and Bible-doctrine, and Bible-words, if individual or Congregation is to abide and do good, must interpenetrate every song and prayer, and sermon and service, or doom is certain. As well sow sand on sand, and look for harvest else. The Word of Christ is so strong a thing, that it inevitably lifts up and keeps up whosoever keeps it; and is so pure a thing, that it as inevitably purifies; and so grand a thing, that it infallibly greatens its possessor. It is to have the Holy of Holies

without the Shechinah-glory—the tables of stone without the ‘graving’—the grave of Christ without the white-winged angels telling of resurrection—the throne of God without ‘the Lamb’ in the midst—the cross without Christ, a crucifix not a cross—for any Church to possess the Bible, and assign anything but the supreme place to it. Well, the Church of Philadelphia had ‘kept’ Christ’s ‘word,’ and by a law of its being it had ‘kept’ them, as appears in the concluding preparatory fitness.

3. ‘*Not denied My name.*’ This had reference to certain testing occasions wherein choice and decision and utterance and action correspondent, had to be made. They had ‘confessed’ their allegiance to the Lord Jesus, their worship of Him as God, and their love for Him as their Saviour. That was something to do then. The religion of Jesus was a *religio illicita*. The ‘law’ of the land was against the Christians: the mob was against them. The ‘spirit’ of every (heathen) religion was committed to opposition by what phantasm of conscience remained. There were always throats for the cry, ‘The Christians to the lions’! Antiquity was against them—Prescription was against

them—Pride was against them—Prosperous vice was against them. In those early ages, therefore, to avow oneself a Christian was to ensure scorn, loss, peril, all ‘evil entreating,’ and what was to many extremely trying, lowliest association and companionship.¹ So that there was a temptation to conceal discipleship, to falter before the risks of open avowal, to retreat into the secrecies of the ‘inner life’ from the noise and strife and ignominy of a declared following of the Crucified. But all this was resisted and overcome, and these ‘believers’ of Philadelphia stood fast, and denied not the ‘name’ of Jesus. It will ever be so where the grace of God has not

¹ Gems bearing the Christian symbols and monograms of the earliest eras of Christianity are extant, which are of priceless value in the market. As these could only be worn by the ‘rich,’ if not the ‘noble,’ it is pleasing to recognise herein silent proof that among the adherents of Jesus there were more than ‘the common people’; not many, perhaps, still some ‘wise,’ ‘mighty,’ ‘noble’ (1 Corinthians i. 26). I have not seen this bit of incidental evidence turned to account as it might be. Consult King and the other authorities on ‘gems.’ Nothing but the very ‘grace of God’ could have withdrawn such adherents of Christianity from their cultured and fastidious circles into association with the poor, and mean, and rough-mannered.

only been taken hold of, but holds. Once let the 'little strength' be in a man or Congregation as in the Philadelphian Church—once let the 'word of Christ' be 'kept' as by them, and there will and must be this heroic avowal of the inner faith and love. The slenderest rootlet, if only it has life, placed in the least crevice of hugest wall or cliff, will shatter it as certainly as gunpowder, by its simple principle of growth; and co-equally does the presence of the 'Word' in a man's heart as in a Church, energize to manly confession and robust fealty, before which 'the mountains become a plain.' Regarding 'confession,' then, of Christ in its deep and genuine form, the Philadelphian Congregation proved 'faithful,' and in the face of all peril and scorn 'denied' not His name.

And, my dear friends, how stands it with you? What has been your attitude and 'witness' in the circumstances of the Church of Philadelphia? Have you been true to your Christianhood in moments of crisis and trial and decision? I am very well aware that it has come to be *the* respectable thing to attend Church or Chapel—to be known to attend 'some-

where ;' and if that, with such additions as regular payment of pew-rents, and giving less or more to support a given Congregation, made man or woman Christian, the old hardness of confession of Christ were matter of the Past. But, Sirs, Christianity is not that, or anything so merely visible, and mean, and poor, and unspiritual. No legerdemain will guise so as to disguise the worthlessness of a Christian profession that is so earthly and outward and Sodom-fruited as that. We must have something mightier and richer and diviner far—we must be in the world but not of it—must be willing to be deemed 'peculiar'—must be ashamed of nothing save sin, and dare to shun sin however specious and fashionable—must carry principle and conscience with us into our daily life—must be prepared to resist the tide and current of frivolous disbelief—must 'contend' for the old, plain, simple Gospel—must fill our mouths with the great, strong, vigorous Bible-words that utter the FACTS of man's state and destiny— not timidly touch them with our lips—must be brave to assert the supreme claims of eternal realities ; and the right God in Christ has, on proportioned up-giving to Him and His service,

of our means, our time, our personal activity and influence, even of all we are and have.

Now, my friends, in these days, as of old, testing-times, sifting occasions present themselves; and it is well that we should 'search' and see to the bottom of our own case. Yes; and just let any Christian man—taken at random—appear and use Christ's name simply and truly, and he will find, before twenty-four hours are over his head, that the reproach of Christ is not past. For example,—as Nonconformists we have to face the *prestige*, the position, the social altitude of what is called, but miscalled, **THE CHURCH**—for the world's Christianity is monopolized by no single section—and while respecting a Churchman's election of his Church, and honouring him all the more when he is true to it, it is demanded of us that we let it be felt that we are loyal to our Nonconformity, as reckoning it a larger expression of our 'beliefs' than elsewhere we can get or give. You don't find the early Christians paying court to the dignitaries of the old Jewish 'Church'—you don't find them giving way by a hair's-breadth to any hierarchial or traditional assumptions. Within the region of

their Christianhood they could recognise only parity of all in Jesus Christ. Be it ours at this later day never to forget the righteousness, the worth, the power, and to us, the superiority of our Christian Nonconformity. Let us be Nonconformist avowedly, unmistakably, uncompromisingly, but ever courteously, and as followers of Him—

‘The first true gentleman that ever breathed.’

Looking in another direction for self-examination and testing, you find one restrained from ‘confessing’ Christ, from carrying his Christianity with him everywhere, lest a nickname be cast at him. He would like to go to the Prayer-meeting or Sunday-school, or with ‘tracts’—as so many leaves of life—in visitation: but he dreads the sniggering, and laughter, and pointing of the finger at the street-corners: or perchance what such-and-such will say, or what will be thought of him by fashionable friends and companions. Why all this? Making every allowance for natural timorousness, and sensitiveness, and shrinking from roughness, the conscious or unconscious source of it is a wish to escape the ‘reproach’ of Christ, such as

all valorous avowal of Him and declared serving of Him, involve. There is perilous approach to 'denial' of Christ in such pusillanimity: for here are His words:—
'Whosoever . . . shall confess Me BEFORE MEN, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny Me BEFORE MEN, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.' (St. Matthew x. 32, 33.)

Finally here, with reference to our entrance into this our new and splendid Church, there is room and call for keen scrutiny of motive and verifying of Christian character. If you are found in St. George's while it would have been beneath you to enter humble Mount Street; if you are here as looking on this as genteel and that as vulgar, then in all faithfulness I must warn you that you thereby betray miserable notions of what makes the true glory of a Church: nay more, all whom my words touch may well feel themselves sent to a throne of grace in penitent and abasing contrition: for depend upon it, that is a contemptible and sorrowful Christian profession, and that is a phantom of life, not a living Congregation, that looks to a church-fabric, and cushioned-seats, and

show, for influence, and strength, and blessing.

I am not so ignorant or so foolish as to undervalue 'comeliness' in God's house—beauty, even splendour of adornment. The God of the house loves the beautiful and the magnificent as He loves the truth: and I do not forget that the first offerings laid at the feet of the Holy Child were not necessities, but luxuries: for 'when they had opened their TREASURES, they presented unto Him gifts; GOLD, frankincense, and myrrh.' (St. Matthew ii. 11.) Far be it from me to be oblivious of the controlling power of circumstance, of culture and refinement, of delicacy unto daintiness of taste as is instinctively offended with not a little that embases our Nonconformist Congregations. If others go too far in one way, we go too far in another: and it is well that Nonconformity grows in reverence for what may admittedly be revered without superstition, in learning, in general culture, and refinement, and grace of appearance, without, I trust, losing aught of robustness, or heroism, or preference of the real over the seeming. But behind all that, comes up the need of seeing to it that we do not

confuse respectability of outward position, increased importance in a worldly sense, more inviting accommodation, more equality, if not superiority, with those who have hitherto—at others' cost—strode to the front; more wealth and influence, more command of agencies—with increased spiritual attainment, and deepening, and strengthening, and thoroughness of Christian character.

Gathering up the whole of this train of thought and appeal, I would lift up my voice this day in protest, that better, infinitely, Divinely better, the lowliest 'conventicle,' yea, the unsheltered moor, and 'caves and dens' of the earth, than loftiest cedar-ceiled and fretted roof, under which the 'name' of Christ is 'denied;' better, infinitely, Divinely better, rudest and most stammering utterance, that comes fresh from 'the Word,' than the most polished and mellifluous oratory, enriched, it may be, with the spoils of many languages—that forgets or subordinates it; better, infinitely, Divinely better, the Cross, in all its stern, grim, bald, and horrid bloodiness and shame—unsoftened by its later glory—than your churchyard carvings of it, whence all that is Biblical,

and significant, and awful, is adorned away ; better, infinitely, Divinely better, weakest, faintest, simplest sounding out of the very Gospel of eternal life—Christ for all the world, and all the world for Christ—from a heart glowing with love to it and Him, than thunders of human eloquence that sheathe no lightnings to smite sin, and no spiritual oxygen to vivify and clarify the air. Men and brethren, be it yours and mine to enter and take possession of St. George's with this 'one thing' as our master-aim, to make the one 'name' of Jesus supreme, the 'Word' of Jesus the grand authority, the love of Jesus the constraining motive, the salvation of Jesus the commanding 'burden,' the holiness of Jesus the blessed exemplar, so as at however great distance in achievement, yet in endeavour and aspiration, we shall win the Key-Bearer's verdict, 'I know thy works : behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it : for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.'

We have thus seen the three things that gave fitness to the Church of Philadelphia to do Christ's work. These were the reasons why the Key-Bearer had so set the 'door

open' before them. But opposition was to arise from two quarters, 'Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth' (Rev. iii. 9, 10).

I remark here, generally, how very tender and cheering must have been the intervening of these words of promised success and protection. How must they have animated them to go in at the 'door' thus widely set 'open' before them. I have to offer a very few words on the two classes of opposition, successively:—

1. *From the Jews*, v. 9, 'Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.'

The Acts of the Apostles goes to show, in its pathetic narratives, that wherever the Gospel came, the adherents of the old

system raised opposition. How often we meet a record like this, 'But the Jews stirred up the devout [devoted] and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Barnabas and Paul, and expelled them out of their coasts.' So it was to be in Philadelphia. Their fellow-countrymen should 'persecute' and disdain them; but the assurance is that all their opposition will be counteracted. It is as though the Lord had said, 'I'll bring them out in their true colours as being not of the Israel of God, but of the synagogue of Satan: and I'll bring you forth likewise—you lowly congregation of Philadelphia—in your real character before them; and this will be the result, that whereas to Smyrna I but promised their enemies should not prevail against them, I promise to you that you will bring your enemies to your feet in believing recognition that you are Mine, and so from being adversaries they will be turned into friends; and what conquest so grand, and beautiful, and covetable, as that which transforms hatred into love, and antagonism into union.' Such was the Promise of Him who held, as He still holds, the Key to all hearts, and it was the

actualization of Isaiah's fervid and triumphant vision, Isaiah lx. 14, 'The sons . . . of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, The city of the LORD, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel.' That 'bending' and 'bowing' down 'at the soles of' their 'feet' was, and now is, the Eastern mode of salutation and homage, and is in sweet contrast with the terrible Joshuanic days of trampling on the bared necks of the conquered kings.¹

As matter of historic fact, ecclesiastical annals attest the literal fulfilment of all this within the Philadelphian Church. The 'Epistle' of the venerable IGNATIUS—admittedly genuine—to this Church tells joyously of converts from the most intolerant Judaism being in 'fellowship' with them, and preaching that faith which before they had blasphemed and persecuted.

Well may we thank God for such evidence of the 'power' of the Gospel. With that Gospel put, without reserve, into my hands to be offered as 'good news' to

¹ See Notes at end, *g*.

THEM, wherever in the wide world I may go, and whoever I may address—with this Gospel ‘mighty to save,’ and actually saving, men of the type of Jerusalem sinners, and those in Philadelphia who were so far gone in wickedness as to be designated ‘of the synagogue of Satan’—I can despair of none, I can turn back before no opposition, I can refuse to attack no ‘stronghold.’ So long as a man is a man, and not a doomed spirit, I shall have faith in the omnipotence of grace to bring down the stoutest opposition, and in the omnipotence of prayer to bring down (in another sense) sufficing grace.

2. *From dreadful afflictions impending*, v. 10, ‘Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.’ By ‘the word of my patience’ I understand that ‘word’ which had been addressed to them and accredited, whereby all the old Jewish-Christian conceptions of an outward, an immediate, and a temporally-triumphant ‘Kingdom’ of the Messiah, were put aside; and patience substituted for impatience, calm, enduring ‘hope’ for intense, eager, war-full

expectancy, restraint for spur, moral and spiritual strength for force, and slow and late triumph, after long contest and accumulated hindrances, such as should '*prove*' every grace of Faith, and Trust, and Self-denial, for present victory.

You observe that the period of this 'endurance' is, nevertheless, represented as an 'hour.' This means, I apprehend, a (comparatively) short, sharp, swift, terrible time of sifting and proving: repeated, yet each whole in itself, as the 'hour' in relation to the day, and the day to the year and all time. The promise is—with an almost lyrical play or echo in the words, 'because thou hast *kept* my word I will *keep* thee.'¹ That is, all through the stern probation-period the Lord would guard them. It is not, you mark, that the 'hour' of trial shall be averted, but that when it comes they should be safe under His defence. It is equivalent to saying, 'I will preserve thee in and fetch thee out of it.' The 'hour' should sweep over and not hurt them. It is the New Testament form of Old Testament promises, such as these, 'He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust:

¹ Compare I Peter iv. 12-19.

his truth shall be thy shield and buckler' (Psalm xci. 4); 'For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me upon a rock; (Psalm xxvii. 5); 'When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned: neither shall the flame kindle upon thee' (Isaiah xliii. 2).

It betokens a puny, un-Christly Christianity, when the sufferings, and sorrows, and difficulties, and oppositions, that really are the making of us, are sought to be evaded, to be eliminated from our lives and work. As elsewhere, I have said, temptation or trial sanctified, it may be through long 'endurance,' and mellowed into submissive, acquiescing 'patience'—patience ingenious in laying hold of a 'word' of Christ to lean on—is a far richer and benignant thing than temptation, or trial spared us, or removed without achieving its end. Better, O grandly better, the search and penetration of sore 'trial,' demanding intense, over-ruling, over-mastering 'patience,' than Christianhood after the type of a summer day, unvisited of

cloud, of drenching rain, of slippery path, of huge-shadowed darkness, of ominous haunting sounds. I don't know that man or Church ever did much except in the teeth of difficulties and with strain of 'patience.'

Having given these promises, the Divine Key-Bearer adds, v. 11, 'Behold! I come quickly'—a word of cheer;—'Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown'—a word of monition. I can but touch on each.

1. *A word of cheer*—'Behold! I come quickly.' Remember the Lord Jesus is the speaker, to whom 'one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.' To Him, consequently, the Last Advent, the glorious Epiphany, was as if near. True, when He says, 'I come quickly,' the time seems long to us who measure by our own impatience, and suspense, and sense of burden and mystery, but not so to Him who 'inhabiteth eternity.' We measure by the swing of the pendulum—by the rising and setting of suns and moons—by the return of seasons and by our little centuries, and we think of the weary and sorrowful way of the Wilderness, and moan and cry, 'Lord! O

Lord ! how long ?' But the answer comes back to the ear of Faith, 'Behold ! I come quickly'—don't weary, don't faint, don't pine, don't give up heart, the Day of Glory is coming on, and meanwhile, 'hold that fast which thou hast.' Fitting then, from His lips was this, 'I come *quickly*;' fitting to His calm survey of all, from the beginning; unto the remote end ; fitting to His full knowledge and magnanimous patience. Science tells us that Light travels so 'quickly,' that it is almost too subtly swift for human measurement or arithmetic, and yet the same science tells us that there are stars and worlds so distant from our Earth that though their light has been speeding forward since creation's dawn, it will yet take ages on ages to reach us. Have we not, in this immeasurable rapidity combined with immeasurable delay, what helps us to feel through, if not think through, the 'I come quickly' of our Lord. The Light of the latter-day Glory is hastening on, His 'glorious appearing' is our 'blessed hope,' however slow to our tear-dimmed eyes and wistful hearts.

2. *A word of monition*—'Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.' Theologic controversy has almost

to grotesqueness of orthodoxy darkened this—as I humbly think—extremely clear ‘counsel.’ There is no question here at all of the possibility or impossibility of a child of God ‘falling away’ so as to lose the ‘glory,’ that is, the ‘eternal glory’ appointed for Him. Therefore, all dogmatic examples of Jacob stepping into Esau’s place, and Judah into Reuben’s, and David into Saul’s—though, indeed, neither have any of these to do with eternal destinies or rewards—are utterly beside the mark. To see this, it is only necessary to recall that the Epistle or message is addressed to the Christian congregation of Philadelphia not to an individual, and that the manifest design of the monition was, that they should see to it that the ‘door’ set ‘open’ before them was entered by them, the opportunity availed of, the work for Christ done. For—and here is the turning-point—if they did not, others should be found who would, the work should unfailingly be done by others; but if done by others, then they of the Church of Philadelphia should not have the honour or reward, they should not be crowned for it. In this we have the practical assertion of a principle of the Divine government of

the Church in all its sections, that may well awaken us as a Christian Congregation to action. This day the Key-Bearer has 'opened' a wide 'door' for us—is setting before us, as we have seen, noble opportunities for noble work, toward the weal of souls; placing on the right hand and on the left great possibilities, and if we go in and go at the blessed work—well, and our labours shall be crowned as was the Grecian wrestler with his 'garland.' If not—also well, though ill for us—our candlestick shall be 'put out' or removed, and Christian work that we might and ought to have done, will be transferred to others.

Such, as I take it, is the monitory counsel of these words, 'Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy "garland."'

With reference to the metaphor of this monition I remark that by 'crown' is not intended the diadem of royalty, but as I have read, the 'garland' of the Victor. So that the Philadelphians, in this summons to heroic service, are bidden to 'look' to Jesus. Yonder, in advance, is the 'glorious appearing'—yonder is the Lord, the righteous Judge, with garlands

of immortality in His hands for the Christian victor. Thus they were taught—and we through them—that the sufferings of the Present are designed to educate the Worker for Christ, and to disclose the victor. ‘Hold fast that thou hast’ throughout these sufferings and difficulties, in anticipation of the glorious reward.

My dear friends, I would charge myself and you to place ourselves as a Christian congregation under the influence of this thought. When the Lord appears He may call forward some one—so to say—from the ranks for the very chiefest ‘garland.’ And so too among Congregations. It is perfectly possible that, in like manner, He may turn His approving eye, stretch out His approving hand, and give His amplest rewards to some obscure country Congregation—unrenowned, scarcely heard of beyond its own parish, and that met, perchance, in a building no better than a barn. In such places in Scotland, during last century, the intensest life was to be found; gathered there was stuff for scores of martyrs. I can recall at this moment the humble United Presbyterian ‘meeting-place,’ whence that most venerated of modern missionaries

—ROBERT MOFFAT—went forth, and others lowlier still, which have given as many as twelve ministers of the Gospel and missionaries to all lands. I fear our grand Churches have no such proud boast. May this 'opening' Sunday in St. George's put into the heart of some devoted youth to vow himself 'unto the Lord' as a minister or missionary, by His blessing !

We have now reached a very full and wondrous portion of this altogether full and wondrous Epistle, v. 12, 'Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go no more out : and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from My God : and I will write upon him My new name.'

I deplore that our vanishing time compels me to indicate rather than exhibit fully, the thoughts of these words. Generally, concerning the scene of them, I must confess that I cannot explain the whole. The meaning belongs, I apprehend, partly to time and partly to eternity, partly to Earth and partly to Heaven. I have felt, in meditating on this verse par-

ticularly, as if I had glimpses of meaning that I could not fasten down in words, such as I have had occasion already to characterize as belonging rather to feeling than to thought—that here is a revelation, copied after the earthly type—of the economy of Eternity, and of the grand work and witness that await Christ's true overcomer. Hence, in what I am going to try to say, be it understood that I speak as 'knowing only in part,' and as seeing 'through a glass darkly.' This much seems clear, that to get at the ground-idea of the Vision, we must think of that Temple with which the Church of Philadelphia was familiar, namely, that under the Old Testament dispensation, which was erected at Jerusalem, and whither the people of Israel went up thrice a year from all corners of the Land to worship—with frequent visits even from distant lands, as when the Eunuch of Ethiopia went up to Jerusalem to worship, and at Pentecost, when 'devout men' from every country under heaven were found there. It was a 'House' dedicated to Jehovah for worship, and was, in a deep and real sense, 'inhabited' by Him: for though 'heaven, even the heaven of heavens cannot con-

tain Him,' yet He was pleased to give special manifestations of Himself there. His 'name' was there. He hearkened to the supplication of His people when they prayed, turning their faces toward Jerusalem. He 'heard' them out of His holy Temple. He revealed His loving-kindness in the midst of His Temple.

Besides this ever-memorable Temple, the Philadelphians could not but be familiar with the idea from the number of Temples erected in the region all around them—Temples the very ruins of which astonish, and from among which still stand up in solitary strength 'pillars,' half monumental, half sacrificial, wreathed all round with the names of conquerors and their conquests, and legends of descent and citizenship.¹

Now, under the New Testament, this idea of a building 'made with hands' has given place to another far grander. The Temple in which Jehovah dwells at this later day is not built with marble, and roofed with cedar, and fretted with gold, and flashing with jewels, such as rose on Mount Zion or the Hill of Mars; neither is it the mere Temple of Space, the

¹ Arundell, in his *Visit to the Seven Churches of Asia* (1828, 8vo) repeatedly mentions inscribed 'pillars.'

glorious Temple of Nature with its cerulean dome, and floor of the silver sea and emerald earth. Under the Gospel and the New Covenant, His temple is a spiritual edifice, the foundation of which is Christ and His apostles, and each stone is the 'lively stone' of a human soul—the 'hard and stony heart' being changed and fashioned by the great Master-Builder—renewed and saved by Divine grace. This is brought out with great clearness and frequency in the New Testament, *e.g.*, 'And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone; in Whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in Whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit' (Eph. ii. 20-22); 'Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ' (1 Peter ii. 5).

Such is the grand New Testament thought.

. 'God attributes to place
No sanctity, if none be thither brought
By men who there frequent or therein dwell.'
[MILTON, P. L. xi. 836.]

No holy ground, no holy building, no sham consecration by sham priests or sham ritual, but regenerated and sanctified human beings, gathered into a holy fellowship, formed into a living Temple, and that Temple reared for Eternity, and wherein all the 'little sanctuaries' of the many separate Christian congregations shall find their own appointed place.

Keep, therefore, before your minds the idea of a Temple and its arrangements, as employed to represent the arrangements of God's own spiritual Temple, wherein the 'redeemed' are for ever to dwell. Specifically you have the usage of these ancient Temples to have 'pillars' raised in them—usually in long perspective of rows—whereon, as you heard, hung the trophies, and were inscribed the names and designation, of conquerors; and you are to think of that, transfigured and glorified, partly in the Church below, and ultimately and transcendentally in Heaven. Fixing the eyes of the Church at Philadelphia on such pillars, the Lord says, 'Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the Temple of My God.'

It is not at all difficult to detach the spiritual idea from the outward illustration

here. When we would speak of some eminent man—strong, upright, unselfish, broad-natured, and filling a high post in the community, or in the nation, we say he is a ‘pillar.’ So EDMUND WALLER sang grandly of OLIVER CROMWELL: so the living Laureate of another, as

‘A potent voice of Parliament, a pillar steadfast
in the storm.’

Paul, you remember also, in noting the influence of John and Peter and James in the Church at Jerusalem, speaks of them as ‘pillars.’ Every one understands such language. Well, the Christian overcomer, whose work for Christ is a conquest, is promised to be made a ‘pillar;’ and, while unquestionably the fulness of the promise belongs to Eternity, it nevertheless is seen in the Church below; for He who is the Key-Bearer of every true Christian congregation livingly ‘abides’ there, and He sees a given man, who has strong, grand qualities, and He puts him, by His Divine ‘call’ and ordering, in a place of high honour and lofty service. We have only to look around to realize this. And, my dear Friends, I would have you know and ponder it, that a Congregation is

strong, and likely to continue strong, in the measure wherein its office-bearers and workers are 'called' and 'placed' of the Master. Keep in mind that it is not self-sought honour; it is of God's doing—'*I will make him.*'

But, high as may be the place, and manifold as may be the service, and illustrious as may be the reward here, infinitely beyond all will be the station of such a pillar-man in the Temple Above.

It is further said of the pillar-man, 'And he shall go no more out.' This is congruous with what precedes. An architect—let me say our own gifted and excellent friend, who has given us St. George's out of that true artistic brain, and fine culture and cunning hand of his¹—has his plan, according to which he works, and by which the whole building stands out before his eye ere a stone is laid—nay, even before he has drawn a line of his plan on paper; and when his plan is executed—if it really has been thought out to completeness, *i.e.*, competently—there is no need to take out a 'pillar' here, or to introduce a support there; no displacements, no need for contractions, or enlargements,

¹ James Patterson, Esq.

or any change whatever. His rounded thoughts, as presented in his plan, are executed, are put into every stone, and so the building stands, great or mean, rich or meagre, according to the intellect and available resources of the architect.

Thus is it with the spiritual Temple. It is planned and built for Eternity; and so the place given to the Christian victor in this glorious edifice is an everlasting one — ‘He shall go no more out.’ Glorious contrast this with State and Church alike here below! The ‘pillars’ of the State fall or are changed. It is Peel to-day, and Palmerston to-morrow, and Russell the day after, and now Derby and now Disraeli, and next Gladstone, and so throughout. The ‘pillars’ of the State are as insecure as was earthquake-shaken Philadelphia.¹ And so, in kind with the Church on earth, ‘Our fathers, where are they? The prophets, do they live for ever?’ But the Temple being reared is to last through Eternity, and the ‘pillars’ stand for ever. We have premonitions of this even now: the Reformers and Martyrs are still ‘pillars’ of our hard-won Protestantism. They are more than a glorious

¹ See Notes at close, *h*.

memory: they are still 'powers' influencing thought, and determining action, and kindling emotion, ay, enthusiasm: and thus will it be through Eternity.

The pillar-man¹ who is brought before us has a three-fold promise, and with a little on each I shall close:

1. *He is to bear the name of Jehovah.*—'I will write upon him the name of My God.' The 'pillars' in the ancient heathen Temples, besides the trophy-names and legends of victors, bore frequently the name of the (false) deity or deities thereof. Thus will it be—only for 'false' we are to read 'true'—with this man. In the Church below more dimly, and in the Church above gloriously, he shall manifest Whose he is. So far as this applies to the next world, we must wait the fuller Apocalypse, the clearer Revelation, to know adequately what it means. But, take it as respects the 'living Temple' now and here—this bearing of the Christ-inscribed name marks the forth-showing of God by the pillar-man. His whole life goes to declare a renunciation of all false gods, 'the vanities of the Gentiles,' and the showing-forth that he is the Lord's: deeper

¹ See Notes at close, *i.*

still, the manifestation of God, the God and Father of Jesus Christ. Take heed to the distinction in '*my* God;' not the God of Nature, the great World-Maker, but '*my* God.' Happy the man in whom Christ's handwriting is so plain as to be seen and read of all, and so that all discern him to be living for God as unmistakeably as others are living for Mammon, for Pleasure, for Self, or at most for their own family. 'I will write,' I will 'grave,' deep-cut, not erasible. O! my Brother, my Sister, you wear the name of Christians; but is it of Divine giving and graving? Is it with Divine sanction? Is it true?

2. *He is to bear the name of the 'city of God.'*—'And I will write upon him the name of the city of My God.'

I understand the application of these words to the present: but I confess that I cannot follow them up into the future; and, as before must 'wait.' But as the former inscription was a 'confession,'—in the grand Christian sense,—of God as Jehovah, so here is a marking out of citizenship, and Whither he is going, even to the 'holy city,' which 'cometh down from God out of heaven'—to me inscrutable words by the very blaze of their splendour.

As before the 'name' told Whose he was, so now the added line tells What he is—tells that he is a 'Pilgrim,' whose 'Progress' is day by day toward that Jerusalem the Golden, which has ever been the burden of the songs and hopes and aspirations of the saints of God. The Christ-graven inscription runs, 'This man belongs to New Jerusalem—he seeks not a portion on Earth—he does not belong to Time—he is a 'stranger' here—his citizenship is yonder—he belongs to the realms of perpetual truth and purity and joy. To every observer he has already an unearthly look, as breathing an ampler and Diviner air than belongs to this lower scene, holds a grander 'fellowship' than Earth's proudest friendships may offer, is touched by the Spirit of God, so as to be strong after an unhuman fashion. And so this man accepts the gift of life with all its possibilities and opportunities gratefully, and seeks to do his appointed work on Earth. But nor Rome, nor the Palestinian, unconsecrated Jerusalem, is his 'city.' He looks higher: the jasper walls of 'New Jerusalem' flash before his inward eye in their reach of splendour, and towers, and gates ; and, when he dies, he goes—home.

3. *He is to bear further the 'new name' of Christ.*—'And I will write upon him My new name.' Words elsewhere—in the Epistle to the Church at Pergamos—are commonly used to interpret this—'His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns; and He had a name written, that no man knew, but he Himself' (Rev. xix. 12). Perhaps this is the same—viz., that 'name' which is a secret between the believer and Jesus, inasmuch as it expresses a union into the significance of which the world cannot enter, nor indeed in its specialties and depths any one believer for another. But I apprehend there is an infinite horizon of meaning beyond this. The 'names' of the Key-Bearer thus far revealed do not cover the immensity of what He is. They gather up the Revelation of Him to the extent of human receptivity here; and as the believer receives more 'grace,' his knowledge of Christ deepens and widens. To the pure and thoughtful—thoughtful as well as pure—all life indeed is a continual, growing 'knowledge' of God in Christ. He is Himself the same—the 'Abiding One' (1 Samuel xv. 29)—'Jesus the same Yesterday, To-day, and For Ever;' but to every

believing man, and to the Church universal, He is becoming greater and more glorious,—as the starry spaces become more glorious to advancing science. The Comforter shall ‘glorify Me.’ That was the Promise, and He is doing it still; so that, as a historic fact, bulking out before all who can mark the ‘Signs of the Times’ to the generation of Christian men Christ is becoming grander and more awfully Divine, and yet more tenderly human, as the ages roll past. Never before were so many wistful eyes turned upward to Him. Even intellect and genius, hitherto found at the circumference, by a strange, if it be strange, fascination, seem in our own day to be drawing nearer to the central light, and wonderingly, almost adoringly, to gaze on the One consummate Life, and the fathomless Death. The air is filled with voices crying ‘after Him.’ The World’s eyes roll searchingly to catch the Light of His presence in the gloom,—for the great Hands are felt above them. The breast of universal Humanity aches to pillow itself on the broad bosom,—for the Spirit touches and draws men. There are reachings out and up toward Him, ‘if haply’ there may be answering word, as

‘of old.’ ‘Prayer is being offered to Him continually.’ Strauss, and Renan, and Shenkel may un-deify, and Pressense, and Van Oosterzee, and Lange vindicate ; but The Christ of the simple Gospel abides. If ‘Ecce Homo’ (‘Behold the man!’) be all that one supreme Thinker will yet take for watchword, there is a yearning for the deeper ‘Ecce Deus’ (‘Behold God!’), ‘Ecce Agnus Dei’ (‘Behold the Lamb of God!’). But these multiplied ‘Lives’ of Christ only reveal, do not satisfy, the vast longing. With them all, Christ is too vast for even nineteen centuries fully to disclose. The entire Church does not ‘KNOW’ Him in anything like the deep Pauline meaning of the word. Hence, rightly understood,—as I believe its author intended,—and kept clear of inferences, as though a semi-subjective Christ were meant, there is a true, and great, and noble meaning in Tennyson’s jubilant,

‘Ring in The Christ—that is to be.’

I believe that our knowledge of Christ, as individuals, and as held by the Church in all its sections, is infinitely beneath what it shall be hereafter. Time is on the side of Christ ; civilization is on the side of

Christ ; the spread of Education and of Science is on the side of Christ ; truth and liberty are on the side of Christ. Every new Christian man and woman helps to disclose Him. Each Church, entrusted with a specific Truth, thereby discloses something of Him.¹ And so the Lord goes on 'revealing' Himself—deliberately, patiently, in Divine serenity, carving the letters deep, not striking them off as coins are from a die at a blow. And when at last, in full-orbed splendour, the Sun of Righteousness shall shine in the azure of the 'new heavens,' and when the mighty Hosts of Christ-loving men are gathered before Him, there will be a 'new,' and larger, and grander 'name' to declare Him. That 'new name,' whatever it be, each pillar-man shall bear and manifest. I say 'each,' for poor is that criticism which seeks to empty out the reward by saying that the promise cannot be of comparative eminence because it is to every one of the faithful. But it is no such thing ; it is specifically to the 'overcomer ;' it is to him who, after a specially grand type, serves Christ, and witnesses for and

¹ Notes at end, *j*.

reveals Christ. Nor need there be any fear that the great Architect will, in His lavish grace, fashion more 'pillars' than there are places for. His Temple is too immense, too spacious and capacious, too myriad-placed, to fail of places for every 'pillar,' yea, for every smallest 'lively stone' He prepares. Therefore, be it ours to have a holy ambition to win the 'best gifts' and the noblest station. Gentle Mrs. Hemans (if we err not) prayed,

'Make ^{me} Thine only : let me add but one
To those refulgent steps, all undefiled,
Which glorious minds have piled,
For mounting to Thy throne.

Through calm self-offering, earnest, child-like lone.'

But the Lord exceeds that, exceeds all our asking, for not a 'step' but a 'pillar' is His reward—'I will make him a *pillar* in the temple of My God.'

That 'My,' again recurring, and still a fourth time in this single verse, demands a sentence. There is no doctrine more deep and precious than that of the Divinity of Christ ; and this we found in the opening attributes claimed by Him as 'The Holy' and 'The True.' But the form of His address here reminds us of His human brotherhood. His glory has not changed

Him. He stands forth 'glorified' indeed—like Joseph in Egypt—but still 'that same Jesus.' Therefore, He speaks now the language He spoke on earth—'*My* Father and your Father, *My* God and your God.' If it be blasphemy to exalt any creature to the Throne, it is the very Gospel of God that still the Throne is linked to Earth and Calvary, and that the Man Christ Jesus remains there in all the omnipotence of God, but also in all the sympathy of Humanity. So that in every service, and suffering, and witnessing here, we may reach up weak hands of faith toward the nail-marked hands, turn swimming eyes to the eyes that wept, bring our burden to Him that staggered under His, place our sorrowful heart beside the infinite broken heart; and as a Christian Congregation enter by the 'door' which He, the Key-Bearer has 'opened' this day for us, assured that we have to do with no hard Master, but with One quick to recognise, and clement to forgive, and Almighty to sustain, and covenanted to bless, in every effort to do His will.

Closing all is the seven-fold repeated appeal, 'He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches.'

'He that hath an ear.' The words were 'written,' no doubt, and came as written words before the eye. Ah! but they are for the ear; for by His Divine law greater revelations come to us through the ear than are possible through the eye. 'Faith cometh by hearing.' They are words, then, to be heard. And, my dear Friends, when you have turned them up, or others, Have they spoken to *you*—to *you*? Can you say of them, 'I hear a voice ye cannot hear.' They are spoken *by the Spirit*. They were uttered to John by Him that 'liveth and was dead, and behold, is alive for evermore.' But to the Church of Philadelphia they were spoken by the Spirit. To them the words came from the heart of the Holy Ghost speaking for Christ. They are spoken *to the Churches*. This message to Philadelphia is not to Philadelphia alone—not to that particular Church and to none other—but to 'the Churches.' What a sweep that gives to the Epistle—'To the Churches'—the wide world over and for all Time.—'To the Churches,' then, and to-day—'To the Churches of our Land—to us gathered here in St. George's. God the Holy Ghost 'speaks'—shall we not 'hear'? And what specialty

too!—‘*He* that hath an ear let *him* hear.’ Each individual is summoned to listen. No one need ask, ‘Lord, is it I?’ for every ‘I’ is singled out—‘Let *him* hear.’ That, Sir, means *you*. Ah! we have an ear for other voices—for fireside voices—for market voices—for voices of friendly greeting—for appealing voices that thrill us into pity. But who hath an ear for The Spirit’s voice? And mark, the climax is here. We should probably have named some mightier-seeming thing than this of hearing—but it were not mightier. Only let us ‘hear’ the great yet soft, divine but most human voice of the Spirit of Love speaking for Jesus—only let His grand, deep, wondrous, revealing words go in to the secret chambers, and halls, and mercy-seat, and shrine, of the soul; and the very ‘power’ of God is in us. May it be so with us now! May it be so from Sabbath to Sabbath! May it be so through long generations; and may it be given to us, not only to say, ‘Speak, Lord! thy servants hear,’ but to repeat and realize the faith and patience, the love and energy, the self-denial and consecration, the witness-bearing and success, of the Church at Philadelphia, the Church of ‘a little

strength' laid out for Christ; and thus win, here and hereafter, the verdict and reward of the Key-Bearer.—'I know thy works: behold I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied My name.' 'Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from My God: and I will write upon him My new name.' Amen and Amen.



Philadelphía.

'Two only of the Seven Churches received from our Lord epistles containing no word of rebuke : the suffering Church of Smyrna, and the weak Church of Philadelphia. Two only of the Seven are still extant ; four congregations now representing the martyrs of Smyrna, and 800 Christians now assembling for worship within the still flourishing town of Philadelphia. And that these two Churches do yet exist and flourish, can be referred to nothing else than simply the fulfilment of the good-will of Christ, promised to them so long ago. There are not many Churches that have so long a history as these two, nor many that could tell of such revolutions and emergencies safely ridden through. Everything else in these cities has felt the brunt of time. Conquering armies have swept the country again and again, leaving behind them little trace of the old, and bringing in new governments, new manners, and new inhabitants ; the bond between the ancient Past and the Present has been burst, and burst again, but still the Church of Philadelphia can trace an uninterrupted pedigree to the commended society.'

—MARCUS DODS, M.A.: *The Epistles of our Lord to the Seven Churches of Asia*, pp. 129, 130. [Edinburgh: M'Laren. 1867.]

NOTES.

a. *The 'Angel,'* p. 9

I am aware that it has been disputed that 'angel' here means 'pastor' or 'messenger,' some opposing on ecclesiastical grounds, and others, as turning it in common with the whole Apocalypse, into a mere symbol. The latter, in my opinion, empty out the reality of definite words, and needlessly multiply the difficulties of interpretation. Passing over the ecclesiastical reasoning as not calling for refutation here, it seems to me that *τῷ ἀγγέλῳ τῆς ἐν Φιλδαελφείᾳ ἐκκλησίας* (Rev. iii. 7), as explicitly designates and localises a personality as do *ἄγγελος Κυρίου* (St. Matthew i. 20), and *οἱ ἄγγελοι αὐτῶν* (St. Matthew xviii. 10). That the term *ἄγγελος* is used to designate a *human* personality and 'messenger,' is plain from St. Mark i. 2, which refers us back to Malachi iii. 1; the word 'messenger' being the rendering in each case—Gospel and Septuagint—of *ἄγγελος*: and that in the Septuagint representing the usual Hebrew word, *מַלְאָכִים*. . . Compare similarly Joshua vi. 17, and James ii. 25, and Haggai i. 13, and Malachi ii. 7—the last furnishing a definition of the office exactly congruous with our text. See on the 'office' Schoettgen, *Horæ Hebraicæ*, page 1089, seqq.—an old but still vital authority. Classical and Patristic usage confirms our interpretation.

b. *'Open Door,'* p. 20

Our English Version reads 'an open door.' More exactly it is 'opened door,' opened by the Key-Bearer for them. It is a participle not an adjective. Compare Acts vii. 56, 'I see the heavens *opened*.' Has this not been overlooked by expositors?

c. 'Duty and Enjoyment,' p. 23

This matter of the duty of the Church's entering by the 'opened door' set before it by the Key-Bearer, and the co-relative truth that herein lies the Church's truest happiness and the individual believer's highest enjoyment, has a two-fold side—one for those of us who are clergymen or ministers—or what name you will—and one for the constituency of the Congregations. I would wish to burn in upon my own soul, and that of all my brethren, that we are not 'Pastors' of the right sort if our 'ministry' be limited to 'preaching' to our mere Sunday or week-evening audiences. 'God forbid' that I should undervalue 'preaching,' but 'preaching' is one thing, and preaching merely to a select Congregation is another. In these days especially we must be found taking our part in the solution of the clamant social problems and reforms. Further, that is pithless preaching that does not set a-working. Then again, as addressing our congregations, their's is a miserably inadequate Christianhood if it spend itself in self-ministry, self-benefit, and fails to make itself felt blessedly, all round it. I pronounce, nay, denounce, that to be a dead Church that has not all manner of Christian and philanthropic agency in living action within and without it, that does not know the community down to its mire and dregs, wherein it is located, and that does not go at work with might and consecration and large-heartedness. On some of these points, for my own and my brethren's sake, and for our Congregations' sake, to sting and stir us all, I would quote here some powerful and heroic words from Professor Phelps, of Andover, U.S., in an address recently delivered by him to the students of the Theological Seminary there :—

'A Ministry to reach the People.

'If I could be persuaded that the theory of ministerial culture, which I have tried to represent to you, could result legitimately in any such drifting asunder of the pulpit and the lower orders of society, I would abandon the whole of it. I would drop it as I would a viper. A preacher had better work in the dark, with nothing but mother-wit, a quickened conscience, and a Saxon Bible, to teach him what to do and how to do it, than to vault into an aerial ministry, in which only the upper classes shall know or care anything about him. You had better go and *talk* the Gospel in the Cornish dialect, to those miners who told the witnesses summoned by the Committee of the English Parliament, that they had 'never heard of Mister Jesus Christ in

these mines,' than to do the work of the Bishop of London. *Make* your ministry reach the people; in the forms of purest culture if you can, but *reach the people*; with elaborate doctrine if possible, but *reach the people*; with classic speech if it may be, but *reach the people*. The great problem of life to an educated ministry is, to make their culture a *power* instead of a *luxury*. Our temptations are all one way. Our mission is all the other way.

'It is not, then, less education that our clergy need. It is inconceivable to me how any educated man can see relief from our present dangers, or from any dangers, in that direction. Ignorance is a remedy for nothing. So, imperfection of culture is always a misfortune.

'But we do need *consecration* of culture. This is the thing which the world is blindly craving.

'Above all, we need faith in the Christian ideal of culture which measures its value by its use: its dignity by its lowliness; its height in character by its depth of reach after souls below it. This was Christ's own ideal of culture. He possessed no other; He respected no other; He denounced every other most fearfully. Not an act of His life, not a word from His lips, gives any evidence that He would have tolerated the awful anomaly of clerical life, in which a man ministers placidly in a palatial church to none but elect and gilded hearers, with all the paraphernalia of elegance around him, and with culture expressed in the very fragrance of the atmosphere, while "Five Points," and "Boweries," and "Ann Streets," are growing up uncared for by any labours of his, within hearing of his organ and his quartette.

'Our guard against the peril here indicated, then, is spiritual, as distinct from intellectual, in its nature. The cry should be, not "Less intellect! Less study! Less culture!" but simply, "More heart! More prayer! More godliness! More subjection of culture to the salvation of those who have little or none of it!"'

There is only one caveat that I would seek to put in with relation to Professor Phelps' vehement and quickening remonstrance, the more readily that, whether theologically or politically, it is easy to win a cheap (but transient) popularity by exalting the Demos (the Democracy). Having faith in God and Hope from God, I rejoice in every widening and deepening of the franchise of Freedom and Independence and Trust; but it is possible, even very common, to speak as though 'the people,' *qua* such, were of necessity everything that is wise, and true, and chaste, and strong, and good, whereas there are among them a mixture of the good,

the bad, and the indifferent, just as among the 'Upper Ten. Let us value a man for what he is of himself, independent of class and circumstance, and not make class or circumstance the determining thing either way. It follows from this, that there is somewhat of pandering to vulgar prejudices, to mere democratic self-importance in Professor Phelps' sneering, indeed taunting reference—to 'palatial churches' and 'elect and gilded hearers' (whatever the latter may mean or not mean) and the 'paraphernalia of elegance.' You don't find those of the rural Synagogues so denouncing the 'magnificent' Temple in the sacred Capital. You are not to forget—are you?—that the 'rich' and the cultured have 'souls' as well as the 'poor and the ignorant,' and that, other things being equal, they have a right to have their Church-Fabrics in accord with their every-day surroundings. There is no question as to the anti-Christian thoughtlessness of providing a 'palatial Church,' &c., &c., to the ignoring of the abounding necessities within its very shadow. But that is one thing, and to assume (as is virtually done) that those who belong to the 'palatial Church' are of the hard, selfish sort denounced, is extremely unmannerly and extremely untrue. A merely 'rich' man's Church is a monstrosity; but equally so is a merely poor man's Church. The first does not necessarily involve callous neglect of duty such as is reprobated.

In connexion with the topics treated of in the text, and in this Note, I take the present opportunity of recommending urgently the following pamphlet, recently published, *The Power of the Pulpit: wherein does it consist?* By Joshua Wilson: London (Hodder and Stoughton) 1868. This is a Voice from the Pew, or rather from 'the Closet,' which is singularly articulate, judicious, earnest, affectionate, and helpful. It seems to me, in thought, and style, and tone, the perfection of Christian 'rebuks' and appeal. It is enriched by many well-chosen extracts from older and later writers, selected with much catholicity and tact.

Further, as giving a glimpse of even the earthly reward attendant on Christian working for the Key-Bearer, I add this most interesting notice from the *New York Observer*, which reaches me as I go to Press:—

'The Mother-Teacher.

'At a recent celebration of the Sunday-School Union of Paterson, N. J., it was stated that the Sunday School enterprise was started in that city *seventy-four years ago* by Sarah Colt, a little girl *eleven years of age*. She collected the children of the factories together, and taught them from

Sunday to Sunday, until she had as many as sixty under her personal care. For forty years she was a teacher, and is still living in Paterson, eighty-five years of age.

'Now mark the fruits. On the occasion referred to, *four thousand teachers and pupils*, forming a procession over two miles long, marched past the residence of this mother in Israel, saluting her with their sweetest songs, and receiving in return, her acknowledgments in smiles and bows. What must have been her reflections? Who does not rejoice to do her honour?

'Those that be planted in the house of the Lord,
Shall flourish in the courts of our God ;
They shall still bring forth fruit in old age :
They shall be fat and flourishing,
To shew that the Lord is upright :
He is my Rock, and there is no unrighteous in Him.'

d. '*The Saviour's Knowledge*,' p. 25.

'We are sure thou knowest all things.'

Thou knowest, Lord, the weariness and sorrow
Of the sad heart that comes to Thee for rest :
Cares of to-day, and burdens of to-morrow,
Blessings implored, and sins to be confessed :
I come before Thee at Thy gracious word,
And lay them at thy feet ; Thou knowest, Lord.

Thou knowest all the past, how long and blindly
On the dark mountains the lost sheep had strayed ;
How the Good Shepherd followed, and how kindly
He bore it home, upon his shoulders laid,
And healed the bleeding wounds, and soothed the pain,
And brought back life, and hope, and strength again.

Thou knowest all the present ; each temptation,
Each toilsome duty, each foreboding fear ;
All to myself assigned of tribulation,
Or to beloved ones, than self more dear ;
All pensive memories, as I journey on,
Longing for vanished smiles and voices gone.

Thou knowest all the future ; gleams of gladness,
By stormy clouds too quickly overcast ;
Hours of sweet fellowship and parting sadness,
And the dark river to be crossed at last.
O ! what could hope or confidence afford,
To tread that path, but this, Thou knowest, Lord ?

Thou knowest not alone as God, all-knowing ;
 As man, our mortal weakness Thou hast proved :
 On earth with purest sympathies o'erflowing,
 O Saviour, Thou hast wept, and Thou hast loved ;
 And love and sorrow still to Thee may come,
 And find a hiding-place, a rest, a home.

Therefore I come, Thy gentle call obeying,
 And lay my sins and sorrows at Thy feet,
 On everlasting strength my weakness staying,
 Clothed in Thy robe of righteousness complete ;
 Then, rising and refreshed, I leave Thy throne,
 And follow on to know as I am known.

e, Previous Pastor, p. 27.

To chance-readers out of Blackburn I name here my honoured and admirable predecessor, Rev. FRANCIS SKINNER, D.D., who, for well-nigh the full Wilderness-Journey of 'forty years' represented the Presbyterian Church in this town. Beginning with a very few adherents, the Church 'grew,' until ultimately it took its place side by side with the foremost of Nonconformist congregations in the community ; and now, having transferred itself from the humbler and obscurer Mount Street to St. George's, Preston New Road, the congregation enters into a wider sphere and weightier responsibilities, and—it is hoped—increasing 'power' as a witness and Worker for Christ. Dr. Skinner died on December 28th, 1867, and was interred in the Cemetery of Blackburn. Over his grave the Congregation and friends have erected a very elegant and appropriate Monument ; and they have dedicated in Mount Street Chapel a marble tablet and in St. George's a beautiful stained-glass window, to his revered memory. But his best monument is 'the people' who rejoice to trace their spiritual 'life' to him under God. Further details will be found in a memorial volume containing Discourses and Addresses delivered on Dr. Skinner's death by various Ministers. It is hoped that a second congregation may yet be gathered in our old Mount Street Chapel.

f. 'A Little Strength,' p. 31.

This phrase has been misunderstood in two ways: (a), It has been taken as describing the 'poverty' of the Church at Philadelphia. Thus no less a man than Canon Blakesley writes in SMITH'S Dictionary of the Bible, *sub voce* : 'The

locality continued to be subject to constant earthquakes, which in the time of STRABO, rendered even the town-walls of Philadelphia unsafe; but its inhabitants held pertinaciously to the spot, perhaps from the profit which naturally accrued to them from their city being the staple of the great wine-district. But the expense of reparation was constant, and hence, perhaps, the poverty of the members of the Christian Church (οἷδα ὅτι μικρὰν ἔχεις δύναμιν, Rev. iii. 8), who, no doubt, were a portion of the urban population, and heavily taxed for public purposes, as well as subject to private loss by the destruction of their own property. Such lack of spiritual discernment as this meagre and preposterous interpretation betrays is very deplorable. (b). Archbishop TRENCH—never to be named without the highest honour, and even affectionate regard—I apprehend, errs in an opposite direction: he observes, *in loco*: ‘They were probably but a little flock, poor in worldly goods, of small account in the eyes of men (cf. 1 Corinthians i 26-28), having ‘little strength’—*not ‘a little strength’ which would rather be an acknowledgment of power than of weakness*—the fitter, therefore, that God should be glorified in them and by them.’ This appears to us—where italicised—hasty and unwarranted. I say unwarranted, for there is no grammatical necessity for translating ‘little’ rather than ‘a little.’ The case is parallel to 1 Corinthians v. 6, ‘A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.’ It is the leaven that does it, however small in quantity. So the ‘opened door’ is set before the Philadelphian Church, because they had ‘strength,’ though it was small. The English Version, which I have followed in my Exposition, seems, moreover, in completest harmony with the scope—for while it is easy to say, ‘a little strength’ would ‘rather be an acknowledgment of power than of weakness,’ equally easy is it to reply, if you don’t read ‘a little strength,’ you accuse not commend, whereas that the Lord designs commendation is self-evident by the whole tenor of the Epistle and the rewards. Moreover, you thereby take away the basis of these rewards, and neutralize the after emphatic ‘because’ (ὅτι). The Epistle rests on the faithfulness to grace bestowed. The Archbishop’s alternative, ‘an acknowledgment of power’ is much too strong, albeit the least ‘grace’ partakes of the omnipotence of its Bestower. I must be allowed to regret that Archbishop Trench is less happy in his Exposition of the Epistle to Philadelphia than on almost any other portion of similar length: and that throughout he fails to discern, apparently, that it is a ‘door’ for the Church that is ‘opened,’

not at all questions of the Divine sovereignty in receiving or rejecting individuals, or of Divine Church-government, and the like. It is because I hold Archbishop Trench in such profound admiration, and because such deserved weight attaches to his name, that I have thus in detail vindicated our interpretation against his; nor is this the only portion wherein there should be difference if the whole Seven Epistles were in hand.

g. 'Worship,' p. 55.

As remarked in our Exposition, the word 'worship' points to outward marks of respect, such as bowing down, prostration. On the part of the Jews it might be either sincere or insincere. There might be conversion or only humiliation. The word 'worship' is not now in common use to indicate homage offered to man. But in English Version it is not infrequent, e.g., St. Matthew xviii. 26; St. Luke xiv. 10; Acts x. 25. . . . The literal and truer rendering of v. 9 altogether would be, 'Behold, I give out of the synagogue of Satan those who say they are Jews and they are not, but do lie; behold I will make them to come,' &c.

h. *Earthquake*, p. 71.

Tacitus, Ann. ii. 47, the whole region is volcanic. Strabo's narrative is very striking, xii. 8; xiii. 4.

i. *The Pillar-Man*, p. 72.

I venture this coinage of a word, 'pillar-man,' and remark, in passing, that there is no grammatical or any other necessity for either Moses Stuart's or Dean Alford's note *in loco*. The former says, 'Καὶ ἔξω . . . ἐτι is to be referred, not to the *pillar* (for this image is *completed* with the preceding clause), but to the *man*, αὐτόν, i.e., to him who overcometh. *He shall never more go out*, i.e., never depart from or be removed from, the temple in which he is stationed. He shall there occupy a steadfast and a constant place.' On this I observe, granted that the 'image' is 'completed with the preceding clause.' But why? Certainly to prepare for the more literal setting forth of the same promise and reward. So that the 'pillar' and the 'man' are not to be separated but regarded as equivalent.

Dean Alford says, '*And out of it he shall never more go out* (the subject is not the *στύλος* but *ὁ νικῶν*.)' But again we must ask, by what authority is the *στύλος* made different from the *ὁ νικῶν*? or why was the symbol used, if not to represent the man who, by God's grace, becomes a conqueror? Pillar-man seems, then, accurately to gather up at once the figurative and literal meaning or idea.

j. 'Each Church entrusted with a Specific Truth thereby discloses Him,' p. 78.

It were, perhaps, rewarding to look at this thought a little longer and to present it more fully. As I believe in my heart of hearts that supreme over and under all other wills—take Sky above and Sea below to symbolize it—there is One Will—strong, wise, holy—working an eternal purpose on an eternal Plan (of Redemption), so I cannot refuse to recognise His ordering in the manifold divisions and sub-divisions of Christendom. I deny not—indeed mourn over—human narrowness and unlovingness, ay, hates and meannesses, and self-opiniated schisms. Nevertheless, if we could only have a charity wide and judicial, generous and sympathetic enough—like unto Christ's own—the evil of separate action should be reduced almost infinitely. For with Christ as the One all-binding Centre, each section of the Church would then credit the other with genuineness, and from thence advance to the loftier and serener platform of a Divinely-ordered charge of one Truth, or one specific aspect of Truth, or one witness, or work—ASSIGNED to each—not sprung of Chance or Willfulness. I do not think that it would be hard to demonstrate that where you have had CHARACTER there has been in every case a truth and a conscience beneath the heresy (so-called) and the 'separation' (actual). I am more and more satisfied that no single Church has a monopoly of Knowledge of the Truth—more and more satisfied that in the most (apparently) un-Christly sect there are true men and women—more and more satisfied the infinite Perfection 'manifests' Himself through all and overrules all to make 'willing.' This being so, What are all these manifold Churches (for I don't withhold the name from any) but so many mirrors set up by permission of God (and more than that) to reflect the light of Him who 'lighteth every man that cometh into the world,' and so to reveal Christ, and in Christ, God. Christ is immense enough for all to witness for and to; and Christianity, like Him, is the same, and so demands myriad witnesses and

workers to advance it to its triumph, and to make Him KNOWN. O! if we could only accept what of worth and strength to the common cause there is in each of us, and see that Christ is the Key-Bearer, and that He does exercise His prerogative of opening the myriad doors—how inevitably should there be joyous recognition of every—the least—setting forth of Him and His truth, however dimly and inadequately and transiently. Unity in love to Christ, as ‘God manifest’—the Redeemer of Man, is far beyond mere outward or ecclesiastical uniformity. Herein—and not in the sham and wordy ‘union’ of self-styled Evangelical Alliances or in that infidel comprehensiveness which would exorcise God out of His own world, and cries still, ‘Let Him come down from the cross, and we will believe Him,’ and that seeks to unconsecrate the Bible, and make our Father silent if not dumb—is an abiding basis. Charity becomes credulity, born not of Hope but Stupidity, when either your ‘evangelicals’ who do not believe in Baptismal Regeneration or Burial Shrift, nevertheless ‘sign’ the documents affirming them or those spiritual buffoons called Ritualists, who, banning the Reformed Church, nevertheless,—like the other—remain in that Reformed Church and duly take its pay—are spoken of with bated breath. But Churchism, whether Conformist or Nonconformist, is a pestiferous thing when it is arrogant and exclusive, self-conscious not self-forgetting, selfish not self-denying. Whoever has really wrestled for Truth, reaching forward to Christ, knows how difficult a thing it is, and so is considerate of others who may not see ‘eye to eye’ with him, and he will HOPE and pray and work for ‘The Christ’ who is verily ‘drawing’ ALL MEN unto Himself. May it be increasingly for ‘LIFE’ and not for Doom!



The Crucified :

A SERMON

PREACHED BY

THE REV. WILLIAM M'KERROW, D.D.

MANCHESTER

ON THURSDAY, 18TH JUNE, 1868

ON OPENING

ST. GEORGE'S UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

BLACKBURN, LANCASHIRE

1868.

NOTE.

It was my wish to have placed Dr. M'Kerrow's Sermon first; and I waited unto the last moment for his corrected manuscript, extended from shorthand. At last, when I had gone to press with my own, despairing of receiving his, it reaches me *in medias res*. I reluctantly make it the second instead of the first half of our little volume. I rejoice that a Sermon so full of Christ, so strong in thought, and powerful in statement, and earnest in appeal, is thus placed on permanent record; and I pray God that it may be used of The Master to do good among us, and wherever it may go.

A. B. G.

THE CRUCIFIED.

'But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.'—1 COR. i. 23, 24.

THE reason of men has led them, in all ages and countries of the world, to inquire whether there be a Supreme Being, and how His favour may be obtained, if He exist, and take notice of earthly things. They have commonly believed that they have sinned against Him, and exposed themselves to punishment. They have employed prayers and offerings, sacrifices and services, to avert His anger and to secure His friendship. The history of ancient nations makes known to us the nature of their religious opinions and practices. But, to whatever people we look, we discover the prevalence only of idolatry and superstition, of vice and

G

wretchedness. We mark the progress of civilization, but we fail to perceive the development of religious truth, pure worship, and sound morality in connexion with it. The empires of Assyria and Egypt, of Greece and Rome, rose, flourished, and declined; conquerors and priests, kings and philosophers, founded dynasties of opinion and rule, or introduced changes and diffused new influences, but the old errors and immoralities still retained their power.

There was one people alone which derived their knowledge from a higher source than all the rest, by whom the unity and perfection of God, with the nature of the duties which He required, were understood; but even the descendants of Abraham were always lapsing from the ordinances of the revelation which they had received from heaven, and turning aside to the practice of idolatry and wickedness. Their religion, however, even in the purest and best forms of its manifestation, was but as the morning light which ushers in the perfect day. When about four thousand years of the history of the world had passed away, when the kingdoms of Pharaoh, of Darius.

and of Cyrus had perished ; when Greece and Judea had yielded to the power of the Roman arms ; when the philosophies of Zoroaster and Pythagoras, of Socrates and Plato, of Zeno and Epicurus, had been given to the world ; and when time enough had been enjoyed to show what earthly power and wisdom could do for humanity, there appeared at last a humble Jew, as a teacher of His fellow-men, and by Him doctrines truer, nobler, and better far were delivered than sages had ever taught ; and reforms and changes were accomplished infinitely more beneficial than kings and priests had ever achieved. It is of His Divine religion that Paul, one of His most intellectual and devoted disciples, while referring to the opinions of its ignorant despisers, on the one hand, and of those, on the other, who had embraced its faith, and obtained an interest in its blessings, thus speaks, 'For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness ; but unto us who are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise ? Where is the scribe ? Where is the disputer of

this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock,' &c.

Let me proceed to consider—I. *The special subject of Paul's preaching* to those Jews and Greeks to whom he had the opportunity of addressing himself. He and his fellow-apostles preached to them 'Christ crucified.'

The subjects with which the historians, philosophers, and poets of the day occupied themselves were altogether different. They wrote and discoursed about the affairs of kingdoms, the theories of distinguished sophists, or the fancies which imagination formed and expressed. But Paul did not speak of kings or heroes, or men of genius, nor of the political questions and events that agitated either the Jewish or Gentile communities. There was one singular individual in whom his interest was concentrated, and one strange subject which he loved to study

and proclaim. He had become a disciple of Christ, and to the promulgation of the doctrines of his Lord and Master he had determined to devote all his energies of mind and body. Who was this Christ whom he so greatly loved, and for whose cause he went about preaching? Jesus was the name by which He was first known, and it was one by no means uncommon among the Jews. It signifies a Saviour, and in His case was peculiarly descriptive of the character and works which in His manhood He displayed. He was born in Bethlehem, and brought up in Nazareth, two of the most obscure and unimportant villages in the land of Judea. His parents were poor and unknown, His reputed father being a carpenter, who earned his bread by the labour of his hands. Jesus was thus surrounded by circumstances of poverty and toil from the days of His childhood, and in His youth, and up to the time when He revealed Himself as the greatest of the prophets of Israel, He seems to have followed the occupation already mentioned. Of the early period of His life we have but little information. His peculiar intelligence and piety, however,

must have attracted the notice and excited the wonder of the people among whom He dwelt. When He began to be about thirty years of age, He assumed the office of a public teacher, and went about proclaiming the introduction of the kingdom of heaven, and the necessity of repentance, denouncing the errors and corruptions with which the Scribes and Pharisees had tarnished the purity and weakened the power of the Word of God, exposing the hypocrisies and vices of the day, and giving to all who would listen to Him marvellous lessons of wisdom, relative both to the hearts and lives of men, to earthly and heavenly things, to the duties of time and the destinies of eternity. And not only so, for He likewise confirmed the Divine origin of His Gospel by the splendid miracles which He performed. He frequently healed all manner of sickness and disease, and sometimes restored the dead to life. Many of the people who heard His instructions and beheld His works imagined Him to be the Messiah promised to their fathers, and hence He began to be called by the name of Christ, or the Anointed One. But the chief-priests and elders hated and persecuted

Him, and sought to take away His life. At last they seized Him, and having mocked, insulted, and tortured Him in various ways, they condemned Him to be crucified. They nailed Him to the cross, and thus He died in shame and agony.

Then it was hoped by His enemies that His followers would be scattered, and that His name and cause would soon perish from the earth. But it was speedily rumoured that He had risen from the dead, and been received up into heaven. Those who had been the companions of His ministry, and many others of His disciples, boldly testified that they had often seen Him after His resurrection, and that they had witnessed His ascension, and watched Him rising higher and higher till a cloud concealed Him from their sight. Being taught the doctrines of His Gospel more fully by His Spirit, and being endowed with power from on high, they began to show how ancient prediction had been fulfilled in His history, to assert that He was indeed 'The Christ,' to represent His death on the cross to have been designed to be a propitiation for sin, and to enforce the holiness which He required of His followers by the constraining motive

of the love which He displayed, and of the eternal life which He promised. No ridicule, no threatening, no suffering could induce them to cease from the proclamation of those doctrines. Multitudes became convinced of their Divine truth, and avowed themselves to be the disciples of the crucified Jesus. Amidst all the persecutions which the malice and power of enemies could inflict, the Gospel added daily to the number of its adherents, till Saul of Tarsus, one of its bitterest and most unsparing foes, was converted to its faith, and consecrated to its service. He renounced for its sake all worldly honours and prospects, and 'determined to know nothing among his fellow-men but Jesus Christ and Him crucified.' It was the delight of his mind and the labour of his life to tell of the unsearchable riches of the grace of his Lord, and to press on the acceptance of the sinful and perishing around him peace through the blood of the cross. For the sake of Christ and the salvation of souls he was willing to do all things, and to dare all things, 'not counting his life dear unto him, that he might finish his course with joy, and the ministry which he had received of the

Lord Jesus,' to testify the Gospel of the grace of God.

And to us, my brethren, the teaching of Paul and of the other apostles regarding Christ crucified has been communicated. Do we, then, love to read, to hear, and to think of the history of the Man of Sorrows? Have we any portion of the faith and feeling of him who could say, 'To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain,' to whom all the wisdom and literature, all the fame and wealth of the world, and all the opinions and deeds of the great men of the earth, whether philosophers, or kings, or heroes, were vanity, or as nothing when compared with the knowledge of the character and works, of the death and salvation, of Christ? Oh, let us see that our interest in everything else is subordinated to that which we take in the doctrine and the cross of Jesus!

I now come to consider—II. *The opinion which was entertained concerning the subject of Paul's preaching* by the Jews and Greeks, to whom he and his fellow-apostles addressed themselves. 'We preach Christ crucified,' he says, 'to the Jews a stumblingblock, and to the Greeks foolishness.'—When Jesus came to His

own, His own received Him not. His countrymen in general displayed the strongest hostility both to Himself and His disciples. The Gentiles also, to whom His servants in due time carried the knowledge of His Gospel, were to a large extent opposed to its doctrine, and treated with scorn and contempt its principles and followers. But what says the apostle (1.) *with regard to the Jews?* The preaching of Christ crucified was to them 'a stumblingblock.' It was an obstacle to the common and familiar course of their opinions and practices. It came in conflict with their prejudices, hopes, and customs. It was designed to overthrow the national religious privileges and forms in which they gloried. They had always boasted of their descent from Abraham, the friend of God, and considered themselves to be the peculiar people of the Lord. They had been separated from the rest of the nations, and had enjoyed special intercourse with heaven. The ritual and laws of Moses, and the teachings and writings of their prophets were all distinguishing manifestations of the singular relation in which they stood to the only living and true God. They had

been taught to look forward to the coming of an illustrious personage, who was to deliver them from the power of their enemies, and to raise them to dignity, honour, and happiness. In the days of Christ the religion of the Jews had become greatly corrupted; outward forms and ceremonies had usurped the place of true piety and morality, and the hypocrisy of the Pharisees was no less prevalent than the worldliness of the common people. Reliance on the Divine origin of their ritual, while the weightier matters of the law were neglected, expectation of Divine interference to break the yoke imposed by the Roman Government, and hatred and contempt of the Gentiles around them, were the common characteristics of the countrymen of Jesus when He appeared among them to introduce the doctrines of His Gospel.

Could it fail to be to them a stumbling-block? How strangely opposed were His appearance and teaching and circumstances, with those of His apostles, to their opinions, prejudices, customs, and anticipations! Jesus, apparently of human origin, and brought up in obscurity and poverty, declared Himself to be the

Messiah, the prince who had been promised to their fathers, the great deliverer by whom the redemption of Israel was to be accomplished ; and His followers, even after His crucifixion, continued to reiterate this assertion, and to maintain it by various arguments in addition to those which He Himself had employed. Thus it was constantly affirmed to the Jews by those who preached to them the Gospel, that their notions with respect to the character, circumstances, and designs of the Christ—the Messiah—were altogether erroneous ; that the views of His earthly grandeur and military achievements were utterly mistaken, and that Jesus of Nazareth, whom by wicked hands they had crucified and slain, was the illustrious Son and Lord of David, to whom all the prophets had given witness. They were told that He had come into the world to rescue them from the bondage of sin ; that His death was the only sacrifice by which human guilt could be taken away ; and that all the various propitiations under the law were symbolical of the offering of His body and blood once for all. They were informed that His kingdom was not one of earthly grandeur and power and

triumph, but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. They were assured that the religious distinctions which had hitherto existed between them and the Gentiles were no longer to continue; that the middle-wall of partition which had from the time of Moses separated them from their fellow men of other countries and names, was now broken down; and that it was the gracious design of the common God and Father of all to make one in the Church and fellowship and salvation of His Son, Christ Jesus, Greek and Jew, Barbarian and Scythian, bond and free. Such were the testimonies of the apostles regarding Christ and the new religion. What! could it be true that the crucified Man of Nazareth was the Son of God and the Saviour of the world, and that He had been raised from the dead and received up into heaven? Could it be true that the worship of the temple was to be abolished, and that the smoke of its altars was to cease, that the sprinkling with blood and the washing with water which had for so many ages been observed, were to pass away as now needless ceremonies? Could it be true that all places were equally holy, that every

human heart was a shrine unto God, that every believer in Christ was a priest to offer spiritual sacrifices? Could it be true that bodily exercise profiteth little, and that no worship is acceptable to Him, who is a Spirit, unless it be rendered in spirit and in truth? Could it be true that the peculiar people of the Lord were to be placed on an entire equality of privilege and blessing with the Gentiles, whom hitherto they had scorned, and with whom they had little or no communication? How repugnant must all such ideas have been to national pride and hope, to the love of old customs and associations, and to the hypocrisy which substituted the form of godliness for its power! With what resentment and disdain did many of the Jews turn away from the doctrines of the cross, and how did they hate and persecute those who preached Christ and Him crucified!

The Jewish feeling, my brethren, is to be found in the present day, not only amongst those who disbelieve and reject the Divine system of grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ, but also among many who call themselves by His name. How much attachment do they

display to mere national creeds and forms, to things of fashion and custom ! What exclusiveness and love of special distinctions do they show ! Are there not multitudes who, instead of inquiring after truth for themselves, are content to follow the faith of their fathers ? With what prejudice has the simple Gospel of Jesus Christ still to contend ! And how greatly disliked are its plan of worship, its spirituality, its purity, and its commonness of privilege ! Is it not true that outward pretence and ceremony are still, as in the days of the Pharisees, the mode in which hypocrisy frequently conceals its worldliness, covetousness, and secret immoralities ? How many are there to whom Christ crucified continues to be a stumblingblock, because of the opposition of His doctrines to their self-righteousness and cherished opinions and habits !

But what (2.) does the apostle declare *respecting the Greeks* ? 'We preach Christ crucified,' he says, 'to the Greeks foolishness.'—The Gospel was generally considered by the various classes of Greeks to be an absurdity, worthy only of ridicule and contempt. They disliked everything associated with the name and sentiments

of the Jews, whom they considered to be an ignorant, a bigoted, and a fanatical people. The common class of these Gentiles, in so far as they concerned themselves about religious opinions, gave their homage to the idols of their fathers and country, were worshippers of Jupiter, Apollo, Juno, Minerva, and a multitude of other gods and goddesses, conceived by human fancies, and represented by statues formed by human hands. Of the one and invisible God of the Jews they had either not heard, or, if His name was known to them, they connected it only with Jewish barbarism and superstition. The philosophers and those of the community who were interested in the literature of the times, despised still more strongly whatever belonged to the unscholarly inhabitants of Judea. The things which sages had studied, about which sophists had wrangled, and of which poets had sung, constituted the only wisdom of opinion and practice to which their attention was given, and of which they boasted. They deemed themselves to be the lights of the world, and scorned the idea of being taught any principle of truth, or civilization, or religion by other nations. What!

was it to be supposed that the Greeks could learn anything important from the Jews? But how foolish, moreover, were the doctrines of the Gospel in their own nature to those haughty and self-complacent people, to the wise and uneducated alike. Not only did it appear to them most presumptuous that Jesus of Nazareth—a poor man, who never had travelled beyond the limits of His own country, who never had been connected with any school of philosophy, and who never had been a proficient in art or science, should pretend to teach wisdom of any kind unto them; but the very instructions which were given in His name seemed to them to be most preposterous. Was it to be believed that one who had been rejected by His own countrymen as an impostor and deceiver of the people could be a prophet sent from heaven to enlighten, reform, and bless the world? Was it to be believed that one who had died on the cross as a malefactor had been raised from the dead, and received up into heaven? Was it to be believed that the blood of one who had expired in shame and agony, enduring a punishment inflicted only on the vilest criminals, could be accepted by Deity as

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a sacrifice for the sins of the world, and a means of procuring pardon, peace, and heaven for all who should become His disciples? To entertain such ideas was considered by the Greeks to be the extreme of folly. They laughed to scorn a religion which came from Judea, from a carpenter, from a man undistinguished by wealth or science, which was propagated by ignorant fishermen, which aimed at the subversion of all other religions, and which represented the salvation of humanity from sin and wrath to depend on the faith that was given to the testimony regarding the life and death of one Jesus, who had been crucified without the gates of Jerusalem.

There are many persons still to whom the Gospel is preached who hold it in as light estimation as was entertained towards it by the ancient Greeks. They are too enlightened and wise in their opinion to receive the doctrines of redemption through the blood of Christ, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of the grace of God. They are philosophers, scholars, thinkers, forsooth, and everything must be measured by the standard of their judgment. They either turn away alto-

gether with disdain from the entire system of Christianity as a revelation from heaven, or, while acknowledging the purity of its morality, pour contempt upon the cross, which it exhibits as the attractive power by which men are drawn to Christ and to holiness. Is it not true that pride of intellect but too often despises the plainest testimony of the Scriptures regarding Christ crucified to be a propitiation for sin? How does it haughtily reject the doctrine which the apostles constantly preached! or how does it labour to pervert the clearest language of the Gospel! Be it ours, my brethren, to satisfy ourselves that the Gospel is no cunningly-devised fable, that it is the truth of God; and then let us submit ourselves with humility to its evident teachings, even though they contain things, the nature or propriety of which our reason does not fully comprehend.

I am thus brought to consider—III. *The very different opinion which was formed of the doctrine which Paul preached by those among both Jews and Greeks who were led, in the providence and by the grace of God, to give to it the faith of their minds and the obedience of their conduct.*

‘We preach Christ crucified,’ the apostle says, ‘to them which are called, whether Jews or Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.’ The ‘called’ were not those who had been merely invited to believe the Gospel—for its statements and appeals were addressed to many of the Jews and Greeks, by whom they were rejected: but rather those who complied with the invitations given to them, who received the truth in the perception of its importance and in the love of its principles, who felt its power, and who were saved through their faith in it. They had been ignorant of it, and hostile to it, but the preaching of it had made them acquainted with its nature, and had entirely changed their sentiments. They were now convinced that Christ crucified was—

1. *The power of God.*—They saw in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ the most wondrous manifestation of Divine omnipotence. In nature they beheld the marvellous works of the Almighty. How great must have been the power which called the universe into existence, which stretched forth the firmament as a curtain, and laid the foundation of the earth, which formed the stars above, and fashioned the

mountains and rocks here below ! What irresistible force is displayed in the movements of those vast orbs that roll through space in the grandeur of rapid, but silent, velocity, and is seen in the rushing of the stream, the dash of the wave, and the stroke of the lightning ! How great must be the God who made all these things ! But how transcendant is the power which the new creation—the salvation which is of Christ—more especially exhibits ! In producing the material frame of things there was no difficulty to oppose the will of the omnipotent God. He spake, and it was done. His purposes were accomplished, whether at once, or through the gradual operation of the processes which He saw fit to employ. But how could the evils of human apostasy be repaired ? How could souls be saved from sin and death ? Could His mercy unconditionally forgive the rebellion of His creatures, and snatch them from the penal consequences of their guilt ? His holiness, and justice, and truth could not thus be dishonoured. Where was the power that could remove the obstacles that stood between the pleadings of one attribute and the claims of the others ? Neither the transgressors themselves, nor

angels, nor any other order of created beings, could overcome the difficulty that apparently resisted the salvation of humanity. But help was found in God. He sent His only-begotten Son into the world to obey and magnify the law, and through death to become a propitiation for sin. Thus the barrier which holiness and justice had reared and guarded was thrown down by the hand that had been nailed to the cross, and mercy was now able to conduct the sinner to the presence of His Maker, and to the throne of grace and of glory. The power which in this wondrous way destroyed the works of the devil, at the same time opened up a channel along which the enlightening and sanctifying influences of Divine truth might flow to the children of wrath and disobedience. Behold, then, in Christ crucified the power of God in relation to the salvation which He has accomplished by the cross for the world, which must otherwise have perished in its wickedness. The Divine perfections have been harmonized and glorified. The guilty have been pardoned, the punishment of sin has been escaped, the prey has been taken from the mighty, the principles and powers of evil

have been spoiled, and the heirs of misery have been invested with eternal life and happiness. Behold in Christ crucified, the power of God in reference to the changes of human circumstance and character which it has produced. It has awakened the most dormant intellects into energy and activity. It has uprooted the strongest prejudices. It has subdued the most stubborn wills. It has softened the hardest hearts. It has overcome the most inveterate habits. It has inspired the noblest heroism. It has filled with the sweetest consolation. It has alleviated the woes of humanity. It has elevated and refined society. It has raised nations as well as individuals to dignity and righteousness, prosperity and happiness. Behold in Christ crucified, the power of God with regard to the triumphs which it is still to achieve. It shall go forth conquering and to conquer, subduing idolatry and superstition, infidelity and false worship, errors and vices, beneath its truth and holiness, breaking the fetters of slavery, turning wars into peace, and diffusing blessings from land to land. Oh! the preaching of Christ crucified has changed the hearts and lives

and circumstances of those whom no philosophy could impress, no party could reform, no violence could convert, no mere moral teaching could comfort. It has 'destroyed death, and him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and delivered them who, through fear of death,' were all their lifetime subject to bondage. And we rejoice in the faith that the cross shall be carried to all countries, and shall gain one victory after another over the enemies of God and humanity, until the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our God, and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever.

'All hail the power of Jesus' name,
Before Him prostrate fall ;
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all.'

2. Christ crucified was to the called or believing *the wisdom of God*.—They had heard of the philosophy of the world, and perhaps some of them were acquainted with the literature of their times ; but they considered all this to be folly, and believed that eternal life was to be found alone in the knowledge of the only 'true God, and of Jesus Christ, whom He had sent.' And all whose eyes have been opened to dis-

cern the truth and beauty of the religion of Jesus must see the most illustrious manifestation of the Divine wisdom in the cross on which He died. The more we know of nature, the more we discover the skill and contrivance of the great Creator of all things. What wondrous wisdom is displayed in the laws of the attractive and repulsive forces by which the suns and systems of immensity are suspended in their places, or sustained in the harmony and regularity of their movements ! What wondrous wisdom is seen in the relation which earthly elements and objects bear to one another in the adjustment of the different parts of organized matter, in their nice adaptation to the purposes which they were evidently designed to accomplish ! Look to the structure of the human body and its connexion with the atmosphere, with light, with the things that sustain that body, or among which it lives, and say if God has not, with the most marvellous skill, made and arranged them all. But in such material plans and combinations there were no difficulties to be overcome, and hence the glory which they display is dimmed and lost in that glory of the cross which excelleth. How could the sinner be

forgiven, and the honour of the Divine government be upheld? How could the evil of apostasy from the laws of heaven be declared, and reconciliation made for the transgressor? How could the punishment of death be inflicted as the penalty of guilt, and life and happiness be granted to the workers of iniquity? Oh! stand by yonder cross, and see the development of the mighty and gracious plan of salvation which infinite wisdom has contrived and completed. *There*, in the substitution, the suffering, and the death of Christ, in the sin-offering of Him who Himself knew no sin, we behold how mercy and truth have been brought to meet together, righteousness and peace to kiss each other. *There* we discover perfect adaptation to the requirements of heaven and to the necessities of men. *There* we perceive that strong affection of Him who draws all men unto Him, working against that power of apostasy which has sent humanity away from its centre in God, and thus maintaining the moral order and harmony of the universe. ‘O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past

finding out !' How beautifully suited, moreover, are all the doctrines of Christ crucified to the intellectual constitution and spiritual necessities of men ! They offer no violence to the mind, but convince by their truth, constrain by the love which they exhibit, purify by the moral precepts which they inculcate, and soothe and cheer by the glorious hopes which they inspire. How, when the sinner looks into his own heart, and sees nothing in it but ingratitude, folly, and sin, is conscience calmed by the assurance that the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanseth from all sin ! How, when afflictions assail and death threatens to destroy, is the mind kept in perfect peace by the faith that 'all things work together for good to them that love God,' and that death itself is gain ! If true happiness be sought, where is it to be found but in the practice of those virtues of justice, meekness, temperance, patience, gentleness, kindness, love, and well-doing, which are so peculiarly fitted to promote the welfare of humanity in all the individual and social relations of life ? Blessed are they who have a hope laid up for them in heaven, who, amidst separations of earth

and time, look forward to their union with those who have died in the Lord, and who, when they are about to disappear from the land of the living, see through the valley and shadow of death the glory, honour, and immortality, which are reserved for them in the kingdom which the once crucified but now exalted Jesus has prepared for them, and is waiting to bestow upon them. O what wisdom is to be compared with that which is to be found in the Gospel of Christ, and which is so singularly adapted to the wants, the capabilities, and the longings of our nature, and which, when followed, guides to true happiness in the life that now is, and to infinite blessedness in the life that is to come. Let us recognise the Divine source from which this wisdom has proceeded, receive it ourselves as the object of our faith, the rule of our conduct, and the hope of our salvation, and let us do what we can to diffuse its knowledge and influence everywhere among our fellow-men, so that they, as well as we, may glorify its Author, and rejoice in its blessings. Amen.

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